Skelton Townscape Heritage Project

Archaeological Excavation at Boroughgate, Skelton 2018

TEES ARCHAEOLOGY

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2018

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Summary

This report describes the methodology and results of an archaeological excavation undertaken by Tees Archaeology at Boroughgate, Skelton. The site is centred on National Grid Reference NZ 6525 1860. The fieldwork was undertaken in July 2018.

The site comprises a series of earthworks directly to the west of a hollow way. These features are elements of the remains of a medieval settlement. The fields are currently used for pasturing cattle and they have not been cultivated in living memory. Prior to the excavations a programme of earthwork and geophysical survey had taken place, the trenches were targeted on features identified during both phases of this fieldwork (Errickson, Daniels & Adams 2017 & Hale 2016).

Four trenches were excavated, all were stripped and excavated wholly by hand, trenches A and B were towards the top of the slope in two separate medieval properties, while C and D were both in the same property at the lower, northern end of the site closer to the castle.

Establishing the Properties
The earliest activity comprised the marking out of the frontages with sequences of ditches (seen in trenches C and D) and with the demarcation of internal boundaries in the properties (trench A), possibly separating occupation areas from those being used for gardening or craft activities.
These ditches were probably associated with the remains of buildings with light timber walls that were seen in trenches A, C & D. Not enough of these buildings was seen to be able to give dimensions or what they may have been used for.

Re-modelling the Property Boundaries
The use of ditches as the front boundary of the properties was superceded by the marking out of the frontage with a substantial bank. This activity was seen in all the trenches, this may have related to a re-organisation of the settlement in general. Unfortunately we have no way of knowing what might have triggered this widespread re-modelling.

Renewed Occupation
Following the re-organisation of the property boundaries the only location where there was clear evidence of re-occupation was in trench A at the top of the hill where light stone walling and a series of padstones indicated a building of possible cruck construction.

Abandonment & Cultivation
The trenches indicated that the settlement had been abandoned in the medieval period, probably around 1400 as there was very little later medieval pottery at the site. There is evidence of medieval cultivation at the site, with the remains of ridge and furrow ploughing clearly still visible.

This confirms the medieval abandonment of the properties on the site and the lack of later finds indicates that ploughing did not continue into the 18th century. The usual mix of clay pipes and pottery that are seen on ploughed fields of later periods was notably absent

1. Introduction

An archaeological excavation of land at Boroughgate, Skelton (Figures 1-3) was undertaken by Tees Archaeology between 25.06.2018 and 06.07.2018 as part of the heritage lottery funded, Skelton Townscape Heritage Project. This included a public open day on Sunday 1st July. The fieldwork was led by Janice Adams and Robin Daniels.

The excavation was the culmination of a three year public participation project to record and investigate the earthworks at Boroughgate. In the two previous years, geophysical survey and earthwork survey had taken place and these had helped to identify the possible location of trenches to try to answer questions about the purpose and date of the earthworks. (Errickson, Daniels & Adams 2017).

Four trenches were excavated with the assistance of local volunteers over a very hot two weeks and this report sets out the results of those excavations.

2. Location and Geology

The site is located at NZ 6525 1860 on ground that slopes quite steeply from south to north (Figures 1-2). The earthworks occupy an area of approximately 2.4ha and the land is used for pasturing cattle and has not been ploughed in living memory. It is bounded to the west by a steeply cut stream valley and there is a similar arrangement to the east.

The topography has severely restricted the space available for the medieval settlement and as a result it comprises a main routeway (Boroughgate) with a single row of properties to its west while to the east a single property has been squeezed in at the northern end of the settlement. The area around the earthworks is largely pasture with ridge and furrow clearly visible in a number of locations, but with enclosure hedges breaking up the landscape. The eastern side of the hollow way is bounded by a hedge and the earthworks are split by an east-west fenceline.

At the southern end of the site the present day Back Lane Farm occupies the position of a number of the previous properties and Back Lane probably provided the original southern boundary to the settlement. To its north the settlement finishes at the gates of Skelton castle, on which it is oriented.

The underlying geology comprises of Whitby Mudstone Formation. A Sedimentary Bedrock formed in the Jurassic Period. The bedrock is overlain by Till, Devensian – Diamicton. The till deposits include clay, sands and gravels (BGS.ac.uk).

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

Historical background

Skelton was developed as the administrative centre of their extensive estates in Yorkshire and Durham by the Brus family. A junior branch of which later became Kings of Scotland, while the senior branch, based at Skelton died out.

From Skelton the Bruses controlled the Tees Valley and were responsible for the founding of the nearby Gisborough Priory. There is little trace of the buildings of the Brus castle at Skelton, the present buildings having replace the medieval castle, however the huge defensive ditch is still clearly visible and the old church, ‘All Saints’ sits within the outer bailey of the castle.

The settlement at Skelton has a number of discrete components. These comprise the green, which is the occupied part of Skelton closest to the castle; the High Street which runs to the east from the green and is probably a later, medieval, expansion of the settlement and Boroughgate.

'Boroughgate' is preserved as the name of a public footpath that runs from the castle up the field to the immediate south. The footpath was once paved as a 'trod' of uncertain date and it runs up a clearly defined hollow way. To the west of this hollow way there are earthworks for its whole length up to the point where it merges into a tarmacked road which is still in use and where Back Lane farm occupies the site of former medieval properties (Errickson, Daniels & Adams 2017). The name 'Boroughgate' means 'town street', gate being a Scandinavian term for a street or road.

The first documentary mention of a possible town at Skelton is in 1240, but there was probably something at Boroughgate before then. In 1301 a merchant, fuller, weaver, potter, tanner, baker, smith, butcher, carpenter and three carriers are mentioned in a tax return for Skelton. Later records mention an innkeeper and gold beater. In 1408, sixteen properties were mentioned at Skelton as well as a market and fair. There is no mention of the borough after the middle of the 16th century (Harrison 1971).

Archaeological background

Between 1969 and 1973 a group of volunteers from Skelton WEA, led by a Mr Martin, excavated in the single property to the west of Boroughgate (Martin 1971). This work recovered medieval pottery of a type subsequently described as East Cleveland Ware (Jones unpub, Vyner 1988) and interpretation of the reports indicates that a medieval long-house, parallel to the frontage was found.

In the 1980s' Steve Sherlock of Cleveland County Archaeology Section led an earthwork survey of the site. Then in 2017 Tees Archaeology commissioned a geophysical survey of the site by Archaeological Services, University of Durham as part of the Skelton Townscape Heritage project. This defined already recognised property boundaries and identified additional ones as well as suggesting the locations of some structures and other features (Errickson, Daniels & Adams 2017). The geophysical survey was followed in 2018 by a further earthworks survey that focussed on the property frontages and attempted to better define possible structures (Errickson, Daniels & Adams 2017).

4. Aims and Objectives

1. To obtain a better understanding of the medieval earthworks at Boroughgate and the information they can provide about the development of Skelton and of the process of medieval Town Creation.
2. To engage and involve as many people as possible in the archaeological work in order to enhance their understanding of the area; provide them with additional skills raise and inspire an enthusiasm for the heritage of the area.

The results of the excavations will form part of a permanent archive of the site. The archive will be held by Tees Archaeology under the site code SBG 18.

5. Methodology

Four trenches were excavated by hand. Trenches A and B were sited in two separate properties at the southern end of the site, while Trenches C and D were both within a single property at the northern end of the site. Each trench was placed on the frontage in the

expectation that this would have been the most intensively used part of the properties. Excavation and recording was undertaken following the methodology set out in Tees Archaeology recording manual. Once the trenches had been de-turfed they were cleaned using the appropriate hand tools. Once features were identified sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50. The location of each trench was surveyed using GPS.

Deposits were recorded using pro-forma context recording sheets. A photographic record of the investigations was compiled using a digital camera. Photographs include a graduated metric scale. The photographic record forms part of the project archive. Temporary benchmarks were established on the site and surveyed with the GPS.

6. Results

In the descriptions below the fills of features are shown as numbers in round brackets and cuts such as ditches and pits are shown as numbers in square brackets. The abbreviation (SF) with a number indicates a Small Find.

Trench A (Figures 3-5 & 18-23 &29)

Excavation Description

The natural deposit, orange brown silt-clay (110) was cut by a series of archaeological features comprising pits/postholes and linear gullies.

At the west end of the trench, directly overlying the natural was a layer of mottled brown/orange silt clay (109) which contained frequent small stones and pea gravel together with 12 sherds of medieval pottery. Cutting this layer was a north/south linear post-trench [121], this measured 1.1m wide and 0.15m deep. An oval posthole [123] cut the base of this feature. The posthole measured 0.6m by 0.42m and was filled by brown silt-clay (122) 0.22m deep. Medium sized stones were present in the centre of this fill; these are likely to have provided packing for a post. The post-trench was backfilled with a mottled orange/brown clay-silt (113; 0.15m thick: Figure 20 & 21), this overlay the posthole fill. A broken stone bowl (SF3) was recovered from this deposit (see below).

A further two postholes/pits; [119] and [125] were excavated in the north part of the trench. Both cut the natural subsoil (110). The first [119] measured 0.3m in diameter and was filled by a grey brown sand-silt (118) 0.06m thick. Posthole/pit [125] was located 1.6m to the west. This has an irregular shape in plan and measured 0.78m at its widest point. It was filled by brown grey silt clay (124) 0.04m deep. Both had similar profiles; sharp steep edges and flat base. To the south towards the centre of the trench was pit [128] filled by sandy silt (115).This feature was not fully excavated.

Cutting the natural subsoil directly east of the post-trench was a north/south linear gully [127], 0.8m wide by 0.3m deep (Figure 19). This gully had a primary fill of mottled dark orange/brown clay silt (126; 0.15m thick). Both fill (115) and fill (126) were sampled for palaeo-environmental material. The samples produced a small assemblage of charred material reflecting deposits of domestic waste associated with occupation and contained evidence for a range of charred plant macrofossils including cultivated crops, wild-gathered foods and weeds typical of medieval and post-medieval contexts in Britain (See section 8).

Above this fill was grey-brown silt (117; 0.1m thick). Medieval pottery, fragments of daub and clinker were recovered from these fills. A very similar feature, an east/west linear gully [120] was present at the south of the trench (Figure 18). This measured 0.6m wide by 0.3m deep and was filled by fine brown silt-clay (114); eight sherds of pottery were recovered from this fill. It is possible this feature was contemporary with latter. The potential

intersection of these features was overlain by layer (106); possibly the same layer as (109). The relationship between the features was not proven by excavation. A sherd of plain ware medieval pottery was recovered from context (109)

At the east end of the trench fill (114) was overlain by the remains of a bank of earth [111]. The earthen bank contained frequent small, medium and large stones and twenty four medieval pottery sherds.

Overlying the bank [111] was the remains of two fragmented wall foundations. Both the east/west wall [105: approx 2m long] and north/south wall [107; 2.2m long] constructed of unbonded stone forming a right angled corner of a building (Figure 23). A large pad stone was present at the corner point. Three further pad stones were located to the west [108] and spaced 1.4m apart (Figure 23). These pad stones would have carried large posts for a timber framed building. The building measured 6.6.m east/west. Wall foundation [107] fronted Boroughgate. These foundations were overlain by a brown silt-clay layer (116) and orange brown stoney silt clay layer (101). Finds from these layers included pottery sherds and a fossil.

The later medieval ridge and furrow ploughing [112] had clearly truncated the archaeological deposits and features in this trench. The plough soil (102) comprised homogonous orange-brown clay silt, five fragments of tile were recovered from this layer. This had been cut by a posthole during the post-medieval to modern period. The posthole [104] measured 0.23m by 0.32m and was only 0.06m deep, filled by (103); it was located towards the west of the trench.

This fill of this posthole and layers (101) and (116) were overlain by the topsoil deposit (100). Twenty two fragments of ceramic building material and seven tile fragments were collected from the topsoil.

Trench A Phasing

Phase 1: Demarcating the plot

The earliest evidence relates to the establishment of the property boundaries. The post-trench [121] probably demarcates the rear of the property or a subdivision of the same. A single posthole [123] was found cutting the base of this trench. The packing stones for a post were present in the posthole fill (122) this and the trench were backfilled with a deposit of clay-silt (113) suggesting they are both contemporary in date (Figure 21) . Twelve sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the underlying layer (109). This layer was only found to the west of the post trench therefore it has potential to represent an occupation deposit or a yard surface.

It is possible that the two linear ditches [120] and [127] found to the east were contemporary with the post trench. These ditches may have been dug to create drainage around a timber structure. However the only evidence for a structure is two badly truncated postholes [125] and [119]. A further posthole was not excavated due to time constraints [128].

Phase 2: Remodelling the settlement

It appears that the settlement went through a period of reorganisation or adjustment. This is evident from the establishment of the stone boundary bank [111] that flanks the route of Boroughgate. This overlay ditch fill [114].

Phase 3: Building construction

The dry stone foundation walls [105 & 107] of a building were constructed upon the stone boundary bank. A pad stone was present at the junction of the two foundations in the north

east corner of the building, this together with a further three pad stones [108] formed the foundation for the north wall of a timber structure of possible cruck construction.

Phase 4: Agriculture and Abandonment

The property was abandoned sometime after the 15th century. The building was removed or demolished and layers of earth possibly relating to this event (101 & 116) now overlay the stone boundary bank. The site was used for agriculture, the corrugated effect of the extant medieval ridge and furrow ploughing was present across the site. The plough furrows [112] had truncated the earlier archaeological features which were now overlain by plough soil (102).

Phase 5: Modern activity

Modern activity was found cutting the plough soil. A single post hole [104] was recorded. This was not seen in the topsoil layer (100).

Trench B (Figures 3, 6, 24, 25 & 30)

Excavation Description

The natural deposit in Trench B was orange clay (210). Cutting this at the west end of the trench was a pair of parallel curvilinear gullies [207] and [209] (Figure 25). These features curved from the north of the trench towards the east. They measured from 0.2m to 0.45m wide by 70mm to 0.1m deep. They were filled with brown clay-silt (206) and (208). Pottery sherds dating to the medieval period were recovered from the fills. Overlying the fill of the gullies was an orange brown layer of clay silt (204). 133 sherds of pottery were recovered from this layer.

At the east end of the trench this layer was found below a linear boundary bank [203] constructed of clay silt containing a high frequency of stones (Figure 24). Overlying this was a plough soil deposit (201 & 202). Above this was the topsoil layer (200); thirty nine fragments of ceramic building material were recovered from the topsoil.

Trench B Phasing

Phase 1: Occupation

The earliest activity in the trench was the parallel gullies [207] and [209] (Figure 25).

Phase 2: Remodelling the property

There must have been a period of abandonment or again reorganisation of the land as the gullies were backfilled (206) and (208) and the overlying layer (204) either had time to accumulate or it was deliberately deposited to remodel the existing property.

After the ground had been altered the boundary bank was constructed [203] (same as [111] in trench A) fronting Boroughgate Lane.

Phase 3: Agriculture and Abandonment

The land was returned agriculture and the medieval ridge and furrow ploughing is evident across the site. Plough soil deposits were recorded (201 & 202).

Trench C (Figures 3, 7, 26 & 27)

Excavation Description

The lowest layers encountered in the trench were yellow/orange clay (307) at the western end and red clay (312) at the eastern end. The yellow/orange clay did contain medieval pottery and was either re-deposited to help level the properties or was produced by human activity. The relationship between (307) and (312) was not established, however (312) seems most likely to be a natural clay, as no finds were associated with it, and would therefore pre-date (307). It is however also possible that the red clay has been re-deposited to create platforms for the properties.

The yellow/orange clay (307) was cut at the western end of the trench by a north-south gully [310] that contained grey-brown clayey silt (309). Gully [310] was 0.55m wide and 0.18m deep and a length of 1.6m was excavated, however it continued in both directions beyond the area excavated. Three round indentations were noted in the bottom of the trench and these are interpreted as the bases of stakes. Fifty one sherds of pottery were found within this gully and it is interpreted as a fence line, possibly representing the wall of a building.

The yellow/orange clay (307) was cut at the westernmost end of the trench by a shallow, north to south, hollow [313] that was overlain by a general layer of light orange silty clay (304) and which contained a great deal of medieval pottery (128 sherds). The hollow was seen for 0.7m of its length but continued to the north and south; it was *c.*1.5m wide and sloped from west to east, having a maximum depth of 0.04m. There were indentations in the underlying clay (307) and these probably represent medieval spade marks. A north-south slot [306], 0.1m wide and 0.04m deep cut through layer (304) and marked the eastern end of the hollow. Its line was first noted as a line of stones of 0.1m size which probably represented packing for posts. The slot [306] was filled with a grey sticky soil (305) which contained 57 sherds of medieval pottery. The hollow is interpreted as the possible side of a furrow, with the slot marking a fence line indicating its eastern limit.

The western edge of a ditch [311] was recovered at the very eastern end of the trench, on the frontage, it cut the red clay (312) and was overlain by layer (304). It ran from north to south and had sides cut at a 45 degree angle. It was filled with a mid-brown friable soil (308) which contained a number of large stones and 5 fragments of ceramic building material. This may have been an original boundary ditch marking the front of the property at a time before the hollow way had eroded.

A bank (303) made of a friable grey-brown sandy silt ran from north to south along the eastern end of the trench, at the front of the property and overlay the ditch [311]. It stood a maximum of 0.5m high and was 1.7m wide and contained a number of large stones (302) and 44 sherds of pottery were found in the section of bank excavated. It was abutted by layer (304).

A grey silty loam (301) filled a hollow in (304) at the western end of the trench and contained 98 sherds of pottery. (304), (301) and (303) were all overlain by the topsoil, a mid brown sandy soil which contained a large amount, 190 sherds, of medieval pottery. The overlying topsoil layer (300) contained two fragments each of drain and tile.

Trench C Phasing

Phase 1: Establishment of property

The earliest activity on the site was the digging of ditch [311] which may have been the original front boundary of the property and this may have been accompanied by the deposition of a layer (307), either to level the property or as a result of early activity in it.

Phase 2: Construction of a building?

The evidence for this comprises gully [310] with its stake positions. This might represent light walling between the trusses of a cruck framed building, in this type of building all of the weight of the roof is carried by the trusses and not by the walling which is therefore no more than a weather break. If [310] does represent the rear wall of a building the front wall may have lain under the later bank (303), giving the building a width of *c.*4m. The medieval buildings excavated in the Tees Valley tend to be between 4 and 5.5m wide (Daniels 1988).

Phase 3: Re-modelling the property

The frontage of the property was re-established with the creation of the bank (303). There is no occupation activity which can be associated with this, but the quantity of pottery recovered in the Phase 4 ploughsoil (304) suggests that it was present and was removed by the later cultivation of the site.

Phase 4: Cultivation of Site

There was evidence of spade digging seen at the western end of the trench in hollow [313] and this was overlain by a ploughsoil (304).

Phase 5: Fenceline

Gully [306] probably represents a fence line cut into fill (304). Possibly fencing of the area to retain livestock and layer 301 may be the result of a hollow being created next to the fence by livestock gathering next to it.

Phase 5: Final Cultivation

The topsoil (300) contained a large amount of medieval pottery which suggests that it is being brought to the surface by ploughing. The absence of significant amount of later material, particularly of 18th and 19th century date suggests that cultivation of the area ceased in the medieval period and it continued as pasture to the present day.

Trench D (Figures 3, 8 & 28)

Excavation Description

The lowest layer encountered was (402) a light yellow/brown clay. This was overlain by a layer of red clay (406), which occupied a depression in the centre of the trench. (406) was in turn overlain by a layer of grey/brown clay (412). This layer (412) was cut by [418] which contained a sequence of three parallel ditches [403], [407] and [410] at the front (east) of the property. Only the western side of [418] was recovered. The three ditches it contained had no clear stratigraphic relationship with each other and are therefore regarded as being broadly contemporary, although it is possible that the easternmost is the earliest and westernmost the latest. This suggestion is based on the probable erosion of the eastern extent of the property as the hollow way of Boroughgate developed. In accordance with this interpretation they will be described from east to west, that is [410], [407], [403]. All three run from north to south and were only seen for a maximum length of 1.5m and all three cut (402).

Only the western edge of [410] was seen in the trench, it had a 'U' shaped profile with a rounded bottom to the ditch and a maximum depth of 0.15m and the width seen was 0.25m. It contained red brown clay (411) with some small stones; one sherd of pottery was recovered.

Ditch [407] had a flat bottom that sloped slightly from west to east. It had a vertical eastern edge and a 45 degree western edge. It was 0.65m wide at the bottom, widening out to 1.15m at the top and had a maximum depth of 0.5m. It contained dark red/brown clay (409)

containing some silt and small stones which was 0.3m deep. This ditch was recut by ditch [419] which had sloping sides and a round bottom. It was 0.15m wide at the base and 0.4m wide at the top with a depth of 0.25m. It contained red brown clay (408) from which 18 sherds of pottery were recovered.

The westernmost ditch [403] was straight sided and flat bottomed with a depth of 0.2m and a width of 0.65m. It was filled by a dark red/brown clay (404) which contained 11 sherds of pottery. The shape of this ditch is closer to what one might expect for a wall of some kind, but there is nothing to corroborate this.

All three ditches were sealed by a layer of clayey soil (413) up to 0.6m deep which sat within the broader cut of [418]. (413) was overlain by (405) another sandy clay which filled the top of [418] but extended above the level of the cut. (413) and (415) were almost certainly deliberate attempts to level the ground surface off, with (415) not only filling the remainder of [418] but being formed as a bank rising at least 0.1m above the level of the cut although it has almost certainly been truncated by later cultivation.

Cultivation of the site seems to have started contemporary with or just after the deposition of (405) and resulted in the deposition of (401) a grey brown soil up to 0.2m deep, which contained a large amount of pottery (226 sherds) representing debris from previous activity in the area. (401) stopped against the low bank that had been formed from (405) and the edge has been given a cut number [417]. It is not clear if this edge is just the result of material being deposited against a bank or is a result of plough action truncating the bank. The profile of (401) in section suggests quite closer spaced ridges, 2m from top to top.

The ploughsoil (401) and bank (405) were both overlain by (416) a mid brown sandy soil containing a few pebbles and some coal. This was excavated as a single layer with the topsoil (400) which was very similar in appearance although the horizon was clear in section. Two fragments of brown salt-glazed sewer pipe/drainpipe stamped with the initials ‘LOR’ were recovered from the topsoil layer together with 6 fragments of ceramic building material. These two layers contained a great deal of medieval pottery (710 sherds). A posthole [414] was identified cutting into (416), it contained fill (415) and had been sealed by the turf line.

Trench D Phasing

Phase 1: Establishment of the Property

The earliest activity is apparently represented by layers (406) and (412) with the sequence of ditches following on from this. It does seem possible that ditch [410] is contemporary with these two layers, but the relationship has been lost because of the later ditches. In this scenario ditch [410] would represent the initial definition of the property, equating to [311] in Trench C with the two layers representing occupation at this period. The slight hollowing that they occupy in the underlying soil (402) may be the result of occupation activity around a building in this area.

Phase 2: Re-defining the frontage

The cutting of ditches [407], its re-cut [419] and [403] may represent attempts to re-establish a front boundary as the frontage was being worn away by the erosion of Boroughgate. The flat bottomed shape of [403] in particular is unusual for a boundary ditch and may relate to the construction of a building. The building would probably be of sleeper beam construction which would be unusual in this kind of context. The alternative would be that this original contained a stone wall foundation for a building but there was insufficient evidence of stonework to corroborate this.

Phase 3: Re-modelling the property

The ditches were deliberately infilled and a bank (405) replaced them as the means of marking the frontage of the property. Any occupation associated with this seems to have been removed by the medieval cultivation of the site, but the quantity of medieval pottery recovered from the overlying layers indicates intensive occupation.

Phase 4: Cultivation

In this phase, cultivation horizons built up against the bank (405) and overlay it resulting in the deposition of soils (401), (416) and (400) and the insertion of the post that is represented by [414]. Following this cultivation ceased and the turf line developed. The absence of significant amounts of later material in the ploughsoil does suggest that cultivation ceased in the medieval period and the field was put down to grass then.

7. Finds

The finds were washed and marked on site by volunteers and at Tees Archaeology offices. Volunteers also attended a post-excavation workshop that involved, sorting, counting/cataloguing and pot marking this was conducted at Skelton Methodist Hall (Figure 32).

Pottery by Blaise Vyner **(Figures 9-14)**

Ceramic studies in this area of north-east Yorkshire, indeed, in northern England as a whole, have not greatly advanced in the past thirty years. The excavation of part of Boulby Medieval village, in 1969, was published twenty years later (Aberg and Smith 1988), while the large ceramic assemblage from Tollesby village (excavated 1972 and 1974) was published with similar urgency (Sherlock 1990). An illustrated catalogue of Medieval pottery in the Yorkshire Museum, published a little later (Jennings 1992) largely completes the published ceramic resource for the area. It might be expected that developer-funded excavations might have produced medieval ceramic assemblages but these have been rare and surprisingly limited – one of the few relevant sites is Tocketts, 4 km south-west of Skelton (Vyner 2001), a location seemingly on the margins of Tees Valley Ware and East Cleveland Ware distribution, and regrettably unpublished. The assemblage reported on here is a welcome addition to the excavated ceramic evidence and a reminder of the potential of further work on pottery production and use in this area of north-east Yorkshire

Chronology of activity indicated by the pottery

The greater part of the ceramic assemblage comprises a large assemblage of medieval pottery, notable for the limited quantity of diagnostic sherds present. There is nothing to provide close dating, although the impression is that the great majority may belong to the 12th to 14th centuries, with little sign of anything of obviously later date. A relatively early date for this assemblage is suggested by the limited range of fabrics and vessel forms present, the majority of the pottery apparently being East Cleveland Ware. Vessels are mainly jars, both plain and glazed. An early date is also suggested by the use of splash glaze on the fine wares, since suspension glazes do not appear until the end of the 12th century (Jennings 1992, 17). The glaze is semi-transparent and has a characteristic ‘pimply’ finish. The pottery assemblage from excavations at Yarm School shares many of the characteristics of the pottery seen here, although the fabric type at Yarm is Tees Valley Ware. The limited range of vessel types and fabrics there has been suggested to belong to the 12th century (Vyner 2009a).

The apparent limited duration of chronological activity in the excavated areas is reflected in the absence of any later medieval material, such as Green Glazed Wares or introductions such as Cistercian Ware. Post-Medieval material is limited to small quantities of earthenware and china of late 19th or early 20th century date, with no representation of 18th and 19th century country pottery. The more recent earthenware and china all comprises small sherds such as could easily have come out with manure for the fields.

Representation of plain and fine wares

Most assemblages, of whatever size, show differential representation of plain and fine wares. Almost invariably plain wares outnumber fine wares, although there can be significant variations within a single assemblage. The plain ware in the assemblage from sample excavation at Low Worsall, for example, varied between 100% and 22%, depending on the location of the trench, and, it is presumed, the status and function of the location (Vyner 2009b). Many plain wares are perfectly adequate for storage, while glazed wares tend to be used for carrying liquids. Glazed wares are also traditionally associated with drink such as wine or beer, and there appears to have been limited use of jugs or drinking vessels such as tygs or mugs.

The ratio of plain to fine wares can be highly variable, the differences potentially arising not wholly out of site status but perhaps because of user preference and the availability of glazed pots. Some indication of this may be visible in an assemblage from fieldwalking at Tocketts, near Guisborough, around 4 km south-west of Skelton. The site has never been published and the pottery report appears to stand alone (Vyner 2001). The principal components of the ceramic assemblage were East Cleveland Ware (42%) and Tees Valley Ware (54%). Of the Tees Valley Ware 91% was plain and only 10% was glazed. By comparison, 37% of the East Cleveland Ware was glazed. Tocketts is of interest in that it appears to lie towards the southern end of Tees Valley Ware distribution and to have been fairly fully within the orbit of East Cleveland Ware. It may be that proximity of the production site accounts for the greater proportion of glazed East Cleveland Ware. In the excavated assemblage from Skelton Boroughgate the proportion of glazed ware varies from 8% to 26%, with almost all of it comprising East Cleveland Ware (Table 2).

Vessel forms

The assemblage is dominated by plain ware jars, while glazed wares are usually jugs, although an unusual, but still small number, of glazed jars are present. There is a single sherd from a vessel with incurved sides which shows evidence for an original piercing through the vessel wall (Fig. 11/2 206d). A sherd from a similar vessel is present at Boulby Medieval village (Vyner 1988, 167 and Fig. 11.10.85), where it was suggested to be Staxton Ware, which this may also be. Sherds are generally small and abraded and rims are usually the distinguishing characteristic. The common rim forms are found on vessels ranging from large to very small and mainly comprise flanged (Fig. 10/6, 202e), expanded flanged (Fig. 11/3, 202d) and squared lozenge (Fig. 9/9, 200b) shapes. Simple everted forms can be rounded (Fig.12/11, 206b) or expanded (Fig.13/2, 400i).

Sources for the pottery

The majority of the pottery appears to be East Cleveland Ware, a fabric type identified in the assemblage from Boulby, East Cleveland, thought to have been produced somewhere in the area between Skelton and Whitby (Vyner 1988, 167). A continuing problem of identification lies in the fact that there are very few comparative assemblages from the East Cleveland area, and there remains the possibility that the assemblage contains material from more than one source.

A substantial assemblage from excavation undertaken in Skelton between 1969 and 1973

contained East Cleveland Ware as well as a somewhat wider, chronologically as well as geographically, range of pottery (Sherlock 1985). Ceramics identified as Red Gritty Ware and Skelton Type Ware were present, calling to mind the possibility of local production which is suggested by documentary evidence (Le Patourel 1968, 113).

Other late medieval material included tentatively-named Osmotherley-type ware and Green Glazed Ware. One of two potential wasters in the assemblage has been suggested to be Late Medieval Fabric Type 1 – Skelton Ware (Jones 1985). In contrast to the assemblage from Boroughgate, the material from Bag Dale, Skelton, had a chronology which extended from the 14th through to the 17th century. East Cleveland Ware also occurs with a range of other ceramics on the medieval village of Tollesby, near Marton, Middlesbrough, where it has been suggested to be a variant of Staxton Ware (Sherlock 1990, 90). However, the apparently closely-drawn area of distribution, currently between Tocketts and Tollesby to the north and Boulby to the south, tends to support a more local production site.

It is highly likely that the dominant pottery type in the present assemblage masks a broader range of wares. A characteristic of East Cleveland Ware is its soft fabric, resulting in loss of glaze and a propensity to abrade, producing unpleasantly dusty pottery assemblages which encourage generalisation. Several rims are reminiscent of Tees Valley Ware forms, while some sherds are more akin to Red Sandy wares. Others have limited grits present and are in hard-fired buff-orange fabrics. It is likely that more detailed analysis of a broader range of assemblages would clarify what remains a somewhat generalised view of pottery production and consumption in East Cleveland.

In hindsight, the completion of the *Review of Ceramic Studies* (Mellor 1994) took place more-or-less concurrently with a decline in research into Medieval ceramics which, so far as Yorkshire and the North-East is concerned, has continued ever since. There has, therefore, been little progress towards addressing the report's principal recommendations, many of which seem unlikely to be achieved, even if they were all any longer seen as the appropriate goals. This historical note is necessary to explain some of the difficulties in assessing the excavated assemblage from Skelton. A catalogue for the pottery assemblage can be found in Appendix 1, Table 2.

Animal Bone by Louisa Gidney

One small bag of faunal remains was recovered from a site with medieval pottery dated to the 12th-14th centuries.

Trench A

Context 111, a stony bank layer, produced a fragment of cattle tibia shaft with a chop mark. The bone is poorly preserved and disintegrating.

Trench B

The find from context 200, topsoil, is not bone but plastic, probably covering for electrical wire.

Context 201, a layer, produced a small, unidentifiable, fragment of calcined bone.

Trench D

Context 400, topsoil, contained two unidentifiable fragments of calcined bone and fragments of three cattle teeth, which are all crumbling. Two of the teeth are maxillary and probably from the same tooth row. The remaining find is of decayed enamel fragments only.

Context 411, a ditch fill, contained one cattle maxillary molar 3, in wear. This find is in better condition than those from 400.

It seems that the soil conditions on this site are not conducive to the survival of animal bone. Only poorly preserved fragments of cattle have survived, even in surface deposits.

Clay Tobacco Pipe (Figure 15) by David Higgins

A clay tobacco pipe bowl depicting a scantily clad woman being carried on the back of a fish (dolphin?) is most likely to have been made around 1860-1900, although production may have carried on into the early C20th (Figure 15). It is a good quality example and although this design of pipe was also made in England, the quality and style of the mould, together with the use of enamelled decoration for the fish eye, show that this is a continental piece, most likely from France. Eight clay pipe stem fragments were recovered from contexts 100, 102, 201 and unstratified contexts (U/S).

Ceramic Building Materials by Janice Adams

Eighty fragments of ceramic building materials including brick and tile fragments were recovered from the upper layers in the trenches (see Table X). Two fragments of brown salt-glazed earthenware sewer pipe, stamped with the initials 'LOR' are likely to date to the 19th century. Thirty six Daub fragments were collected from five contexts, (117, 126, 200, 206 & 400). Most of the fragments are small except for two from context 117 indentations are present possibly from wattle fencing.

Coins by Jennifer Jones

Summary

Two coins were recovered. A Roman copper alloy coin, found unstratified, and part of a medieval silver coin, SF401, from clay bank context D[405].

Results

[u/s] : Roman copper alloy coin, heavily worn, no patination surviving. Stable. The coin is 13.5mm diam x 1.2mm thick.

Obv: ?Diadem head, facing right

Rev: ?2 soldiers with standard

Probably 4th century AD.

D [405] ?SF401 : Slightly more than 25% of a silver coin, likely to be medieval in date. The fragment is 12mm wide x 0.7mm thick, extrapolation giving an original diameter of c18mm. One corner is bent over, another is freshly broken. Under X10 magnification, surface soil removal using water and detergent applied with cotton wool swabs, showed decoration or (indecipherable) lettering on one side, with fine pelleting around the edge. The other side has ?two indecipherable letters, separated by a dot, outside a thin, double-lined border. The field inside has a ?line terminating in a ?small cross. The coin is fragile but stable.

Copper alloy by Jennifer Jones

Summary

Three fragmentary copper alloy objects were found, two of them parts of 19th century buttons, the third an undateable sheet fragment.

Results

[u/s] SF1 : An almost complete, gilded copper alloy button back, highly corroded but stable,

12.5mm diam x 1.3mm thick. One face is undecorated and rough. The other (the back) has a central scar where the button loop (now lost) was attached. Under X10 magnification, surface soil removal using water and detergent applied with cotton wool swabs, revealed part of a gilded surface and the faint, embossed letters 'I' and 'L', probably part of the word 'GILT'. 19th century.

A [100] : Small fragments of extremely thin (0.2mm) copper alloy from a ?four-hole button. The largest fragment is barely 5mm in length, giving an extrapolated button diameter of c13mm+. The tiny fragments do not join, but their appearance and thickness are very similar. They include pieces showing parts of at least two holes. Probably 19th century. Very fragile and corroded.

B [u/s] : A fragment of slightly dished copper alloy sheet. Part of one curved edge is probably original. The fragment is 13.5 x 14 x 1mm thick, with no decoration. The surfaces are corroded with adhering random, semi-mineralised vegetation. Of unknown date and use. Stable.

Iron by Jennifer Jones

Summary

Four iron objects were found, comprising two nails, a fitting and an unstratified buckle frame.

Results

[u/s] : A complete circular buckle, 32mm diam. The frame is rectangular in section, 5-6mm wide x c2.5mm thick. The corroded surfaces are uneven and obscured by soil and corrosion products, but in a raking light, traces of ?diagonal and/or ?floral surface decoration can be seen. The edge may also possibly be scalloped. There is a slight depression on one side, possibly where the buckle pin (now lost) rested.

The whole buckle is bent, perhaps accidentally, or this may be a shoe buckle, though it lacks the usual central bar inside the frame. If a shoe buckle, its shape suggests a 19th century date, earlier examples being more often rectangular or square. Corroded but stable.

A [113] : Large nail, 52mm long. It has a 37mm diam, flat, circular head and the rectangular-sectioned shank , 6 x 7mm max, is broken. All detail obscured by thick corrosion. Stable.

B [201] : Two objects: A ?nail shank 53mm long, rectangular in section, in very poor condition with severe spalling of the corrosion products; a fitting or possibly a swivel, 54mm long, terminating in an intact, closed loop, 25mm diam. The shank, which is probably broken, is square-sectioned, 10 x 10mm max, and tapering. Highly corroded, with corrosion products beginning to spall.

Stone bowl by Jennifer Jones (Figures 16 & 20)

Results

The fill of a shallow hollow, context A [113], contained part of a circular or semi-circular stone bowl, SF3. The context also produced a significant quantity of medieval pottery. The stone artefact is 115mm high x 130mm diameter and represents just under half of an original, which would have had an (extrapolated) diameter of c155mm, if circular (Fig 16). The bowl itself occupies just 50mm of the object's depth, its sides sloping out gently from a flat base. The top edge is rounded. The break across the (near) centre of the bowl is fairly clean, with just a small amount of additional loss close to the base. There is slight damage around the lip and the base of the bowl, probably incurred during use and also some evidence of burning and/or iron staining on the underside and outside. Made from medium-

grained, buff/grey sandstone, the bowl is well-finished inside and out. The outside has visible, slightly diagonal tool marks/decorative lines running from close to the top to the base. Very faint tool marks can be seen inside the bowl itself.

There is no evidence, on the surviving part, for the object having been attached to anything else. The ratio of the size of the bowl to the overall size of the object would have given it good stability. Its small size and the sloping sides of the bowl would perhaps suggest it was used for grinding, though there is no use/wear or discolouration inside the bowl. The other possibility is a stoop, or container for holy water. These can be circular or semi-circular with an integral backing stone, which may have been lost here. However, the depth of extra stone below the actual bowl is perhaps too great to support the notion of a semi-circular stoop and is more suggestive of a free-standing artefact, whatever its purpose.

Glass beads by Jennifer Jones

Summary

Four modern glass beads came from two contexts.

Results

The topsoil finds spots of the beads suggest accidental loss.

A [100] : an unweathered, cobalt blue, hexagonal bead, one end broken, 5mm long x 5.5mm diameter, with a 2mm perforation.

B [200] : an unweathered, cobalt blue, round bead with slightly flattened ends, 4mm long x 5.5mm diameter, with a 1mm perforation.

B [200] : an unweathered, mid-blue, round bead with slightly flattened ends, 9mm long x 11mm diameter with 2mm perforation.

B [200] : an unweathered, opaque, turquoise blue, round bead, in two pieces, 7mm long x 10mm diameter, with a 4mm perforation.

Piece of Coal/?jet by Jennifer Jones

Results

A very small fragment of unburnt coal (<1g wt) came from context B [200].

Context A [100] had a small irregularly shaped block, (3g wt) 23 x 15 x 6mm max, of black, unworked material, with broken edges. X10 microscopic examination observed traces of a vegetative structure in the material, suggesting it could be jet, which has a very low iron content. However, surface iron corrosion products seen here indicate a significant iron component in the composition of the small block. It may still be jet, but is not of the highest quality.

Coal, Clinker and Fuel Waste by Janice Adams

Results

Coal was found in topsoil deposits (200, 300 & 400). Coal is not a naturally found mineral in the soil therefore it must have been transported to site to be used as fuel.

Context	Count
100	7
117	1
200	8
300	2
305	7
400	5
u/s	3

Clinker and fuel waste are both indicators that the coal was been burnt for domestic use in the locality. There is no indication from the small quantity of material that it relates to any industry in the immediate vicinity. A small amount of charcoal was recovered from context 117 although this is too small for analysis.

Miscellaneous unstratified material by Janice Adams

Unstratified (U/S) finds included a carbine shot, two bullets. Four copper alloy flat shank buttons measuring from 15mm to 20mm diameter. A four holed metal sew through button painted brown, 15mm in diameter. A larger (25mm diameter) copper alloy covered shank button was also found, no covering was present. Metal detector finds recovered (U/S) from the spoil heap included 2 American cents. One coin dates to 1983 the other to 1971.

Three slate pencil fragments came from (100 &116) and 2 ironstone nodule fragments from (102 & U/S).

Other finds included a bullet case and a bullet from topsoil (300). 2 cod bottle marble stoppers from topsoil deposit (100) and a small led fragment from context (106).

8. Palaeo-environmental samples by Edward Treasure and Dr Charlotte O'Brien.

Two bulk samples of probable medieval date comprising a pit fill [115] and the fill [126] of a linear gully were taken for paleo-environmental assessment.

The bulk samples were manually floated and sieved through a 500*μ*m mesh. The residues were examined for shells, fruitstones, nutshells, charcoal, small bones, pottery, flint, glass and industrial residues, and were scanned using a magnet for ferrous fragments. The flots were examined at up to x60 magnification for charred and waterlogged botanical remains using a Leica MZ7.5 stereomicroscope. Identification of these was undertaken by comparison with modern reference material held in the Palaeo-environmental Laboratory at Archaeological Services Durham University. Plant nomenclature follows Stace (2010). Habitat classifications follow Preston *et al.* (2002).

Selected charcoal fragments were identified, in order to provide material suitable for radiocarbon dating. The transverse, radial and tangential sections were examined at up to x500 magnification using a Leica DMLM microscope. Identifications were assisted by the descriptions of Schweingruber (1990) and Hather (2000), and modern reference material held in the Palaeo-environmental Laboratory at Archaeological Services Durham University.

The works were undertaken in accordance with the palaeo-environmental research aims and objectives outlined in the regional archaeological research framework and resource agendas (Petts & Gerrard 2006; Hall & Huntley 2007; Huntley 2010).

Results

The samples comprise varying quantities of bone (calcined), clinker/cinder, coal, fuel ash, fired clay, abraded pottery fragments, modern roots, uncharred seeds, charcoal and charred plant macrofossils. The plant macrofossil assemblage is poorly preserved and many of the cereal grains are clinkered and mineral-encrusted. The charcoal assemblage is also poorly preserved, with abundant mineral inclusions. Material suitable for radiocarbon dating is present in both samples. The results are presented in Appendix 1.

The sample from pit fill [115] produced a small assemblage of charred cereal grains comprising bread-type wheat, indeterminate wheat, oat and indeterminate cereals. An indeterminate cereal culm node is also present. Evidence for legumes comprises beans, a pea and bean/pea fragments. Other plant macrofossils comprise a single hazelnut shell fragment and remains of cornflower, goosefoots and grasses. The charcoal assemblage comprises oak (stemwood) and hazel (stemwood and roundwood).

The sample from linear gully fill [126] produced a smaller assemblage of charred plant macrofossils. Cereal grains comprise bread-type wheat, oat and indeterminate cereals. A bread wheat rachis fragment is also present. Other plant macrofossils comprise hazelnut shell fragments and a grass caryopsis. The charcoal assemblage comprises oak (stemwood), *Prunus* sp (roundwood) and hazel (roundwood), with insect degradation present.

Discussion

The samples contain evidence for a range of charred plant macrofossils including cultivated crops, wild-gathered foods and weeds. Bread-type wheat grains (*Triticum* cf. *aestivum*) were recorded and identified based on their characteristic short and bluntly rounded shape, as summarised by Jacomet (2006). These grains were differentiated from other wheat grains (*Triticum* sp) which were less compact in morphology. The two assemblages reflect deposits of domestic waste associated with occupation. The range of crops present (bread wheat, oat, pea and bean) is typical of medieval and post-medieval contexts in Britain (Greig 1991; Hall & Huntley 2007; Moffett 2018). The small number of weed seeds may represent the remains of arable weeds, burnt hay or bedding. The charcoal assemblage probably reflects the use of locally available species for firewood.

9. Data plots using pXRF by Rhys Williams and Gillian Taylor

As part of the project Rhys Williams of Teesside University School of Science, Engineering and Design, undertook sampling work on trenches A and D. Soil samples were extracted in a 1-metre grid system, dried overnight to remove moisture, homogenised to reduce variation, and prepared into small sample cups. Prepared samples were scanned using a Thermo Niton™ XL3t GOLDD+ pXRF with 25kV and 0.1 mA X-ray source to detect the elemental content. Data were analysed using R and plotted as heat maps.

Trench A (Figure 3 & 17)

Magnesium and gold were below the limits of detection, and iron varied too much for a reliable interpretation. Phosphorus content of 0.08-0.18% supported a dwelling, but was too low for a burial site (Eidt, 1984). Phosphorus did show an internal / external divide. The low calcium content in the central area (0.14-0.16%) indicated a clean or food preparation area. The high calcium content in the lower left corner (0.27-0.31%) indicated a refuse site (Vranová *et al.,* 2015). These features were mirrored by aluminium content (Figure *).

Trench D
Trench D did not give such useful data as Trench A other than indicating the accumulation of waste material toward its eastern end.

10. Discussion

The excavations have confirmed that the earthworks on Boroughgate were the location of settlement in the medieval period and it is safe to presume that this was the location of the medieval borough of Skelton.

Phases of Activity

The excavations provided no indication of settlement before the medieval period and while the recent find of an Iron Age quern stone in the field to the west suggests that there is prehistoric activity in the area there was no indication of this from the excavations.

The earliest phase of activity appears to have been the establishment of boundary ditches on the site, these were seen in trenches C and D and it is probably fair to suggest their presence in trenches A and B. These ditches indicate that the settlement has been deliberately laid out with ditches defining the frontage to the street, Boroughgate. Unfortunately there was insufficient time to investigate the boundaries between properties to see if they were established as ditches at the earliest phase.

The establishment of the site was clearly followed by a period of intensive activity as evidenced by the quantities of pottery encountered, however the extent of later disturbance of the site has destroyed much of the evidence of structures of the first phase of settlement. There were however indications in both trenches A C of earthfast timber buildings and there may be further evidence of the earliest buildings elsewhere on the site.

It is clear that there was a large scale re-organisation (re-establishment?) of the settlement with the earlier boundary ditches being replaced with substantial banks on the frontage and the present boundaries between properties may date to this period. The reason for this re-organisation is of course unknown but it does seem to have happened throughout the settlement. Such a widespread re-modelling of boundaries is unlikely to have happened if the properties were occupied and prospering, it suggests an empty site and the inference is that it had been abandoned for some reason and the new boundary banks were a pre-cursor to re-occupation.

That at least some of the properties were re-occupied is evident from the structure recovered in trench A, there was little surviving evidence of re-occupation in the other trenches, probably largely due to the impact of medieval ploughing on the site. The chemical analysis of the soils around the structure in trench A confirmed the likely presence of human activity and indicated those areas that were both inside and outside the building. This technique was only used on trenches A and D and the results for D were not as decisive, being interpreted as suggesting midden area. The archaeological information does not support the idea of a midden but if this was an area occupied by animals the results may have been similar.

Medieval ploughing of the site has taken a toll on the archaeological remains, it does

however indicate widespread abandonment of the properties in the medieval period and the general absence of later material indicates that there has been little activity in the area since that time.

Chronology

The primary dating for the site is the pottery that was recovered and the pottery specialist is quite clear that a date range of 12th to 14th centuries is indicated. This confirms the physical evidence in suggesting that there was little if any later medieval activity on the site and that to all intents the site had been abandoned by the end of the 14th century. This is in broad agreement with the documentary information which indicates occupation of burgage properties into the early 15th century (Errickson, Daniels & Adams 2017).

The earliest documentary reference to a borough at Skelton dates to 1240 AD (Errickson, Daniels & Adams 2017), but the pottery recovered probably pre-dates this by at least sixty years if not more. Skelton came into Brus hands in the early 12th century as part of a large estate and it seems probable that the establishment of the borough at the gate of the castle was commissioned fairly quickly.

Economy

The amount of archaeological information that can be brought to bear on the economy of the settlement is limited. There was very limited recovery of animal bone, probably due to the acidic nature of the soil, certainly insufficient to draw conclusions about the livestock on the site. The paleo-environmental information was a little more forthcoming although the material was badly degraded. This revealed the presence of wheat and oats as well as other cereals and a variety of other material. This reveals a fairly standard picture of medieval occupation without suggesting anything out of the ordinary.

Metalwork is notable by its absence, hardly any copper alloy objects were recovered and only a limited amount of ironwork. This leaves the pottery, this is of a type known as East Cleveland Ware, a quite soft and sandy fabric, markedly different from the hard and gritty Tees Valley ware which wa its contemporary just to the north. This seems to be part of a broader tradition that runs down the eastern coast of Yorkshire into the Vale of Pickering, but is relatively localised compared to Tees Valley Ware.

There are documentary records of potters at Skelton, although their precise location is unknown and it is possible that East Cleveland Ware is a local product. The pottery report notes the proportion of finewares to plain wares and this is generally low for this site with trench A have slightly more fine wares. The main 'foreign' presence is Scarborough ware which was a well distribute medieval fine ware, there is however no evidence of continental imports.

The evidence all points to a settlement of relatively low prosperity which had probably never progressed beyond providing services to the castle. In this sense it may have been very similar to Guisborough where the 'town' was purely a service settlement to the Augustinian priory and did not reach any great level of prosperity in its own right. Unlike Guisborough the borough at Skelton did not survive the medieval period.

Conclusion

While the excavations have confirmed occupation on Boroughgate and provided a chronology for that activity there are still a number of unanswered questions. These particularly relate to the relationship between the differently sized and aligned properties on the site (Errickson, Daniels & Adams 2017). Those closer to the castle are significantly larger than those at the southern end of the site to the south and are on a different alignment. The most obvious reasons for this relate to type of activity and date. There is however no obvious chronological difference between the two sets of properties and equally there was no obvious difference in the type of activity or the status of each property on the basis of the pottery recovered. Although it should be noted that the earliest, ditched, boundaries were not identified in trenches A and B due to time pressures. These questions may be answered by more extensive excavation.

The re-organisation of the settlement was a significant event, the cause of which is unknown, but almost certainly preceded the triple devastations of plague, bad harvests and Scottish raids that led along with other factors to the demise of the Boroughgate settlement. Archaeologists are reluctant to attach specific historical events to archaeological activity however it may be valid to wonder if the rebellion of Peter de Brus I and the subsequent taking of Skelton Castle by King John in February 2016 may not have had a major impact on the settlement (Blakely, R 2005,58).

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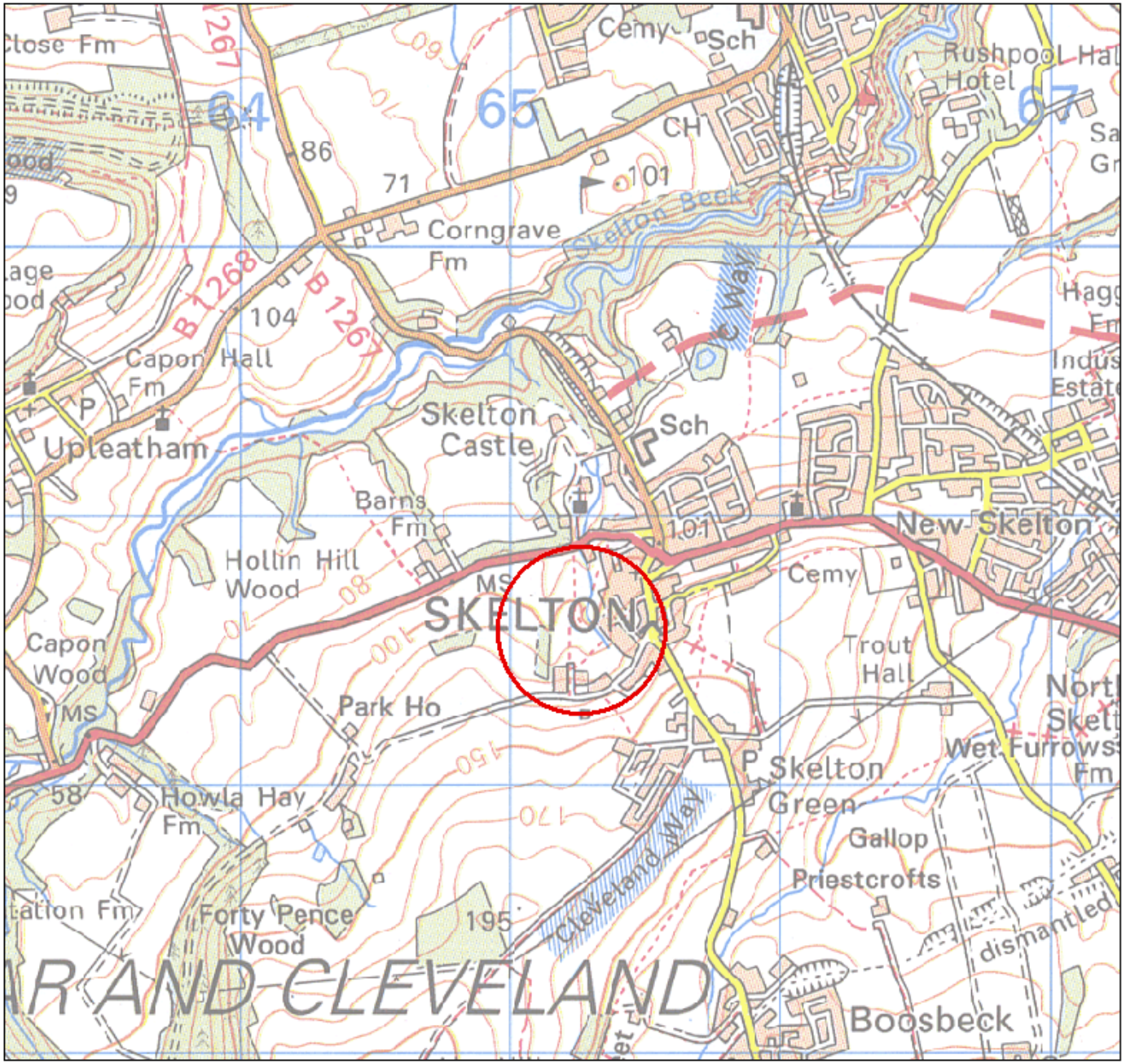

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www.teesarchaeology.com

Figure 1: Site Location

1:20,000

N

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Figure 2: Site Location

1:5,000

100 50 0 100 Meters

N

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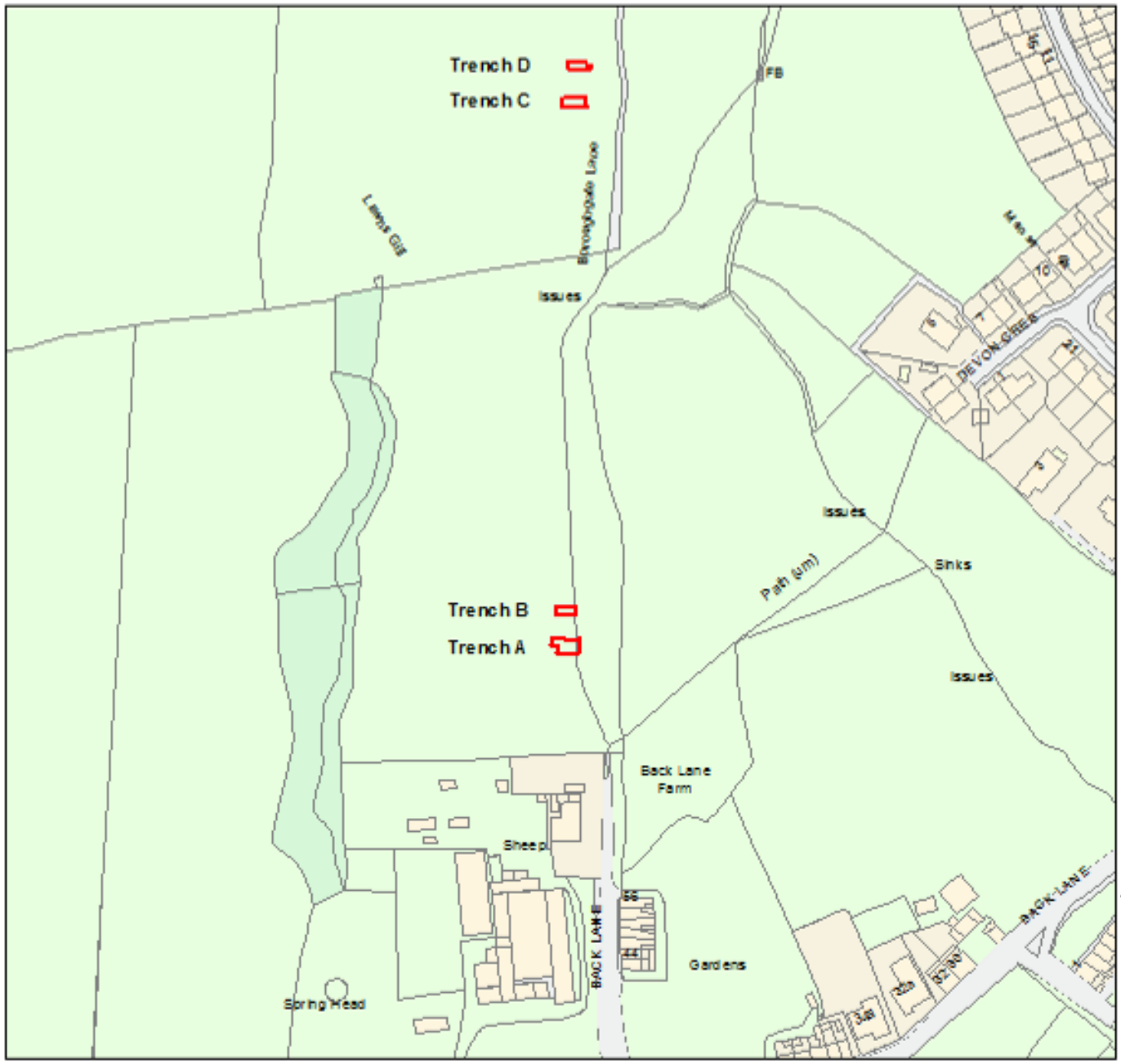

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Figure 3: Trench Locations

1:2,000

50 25 0 50 Meters

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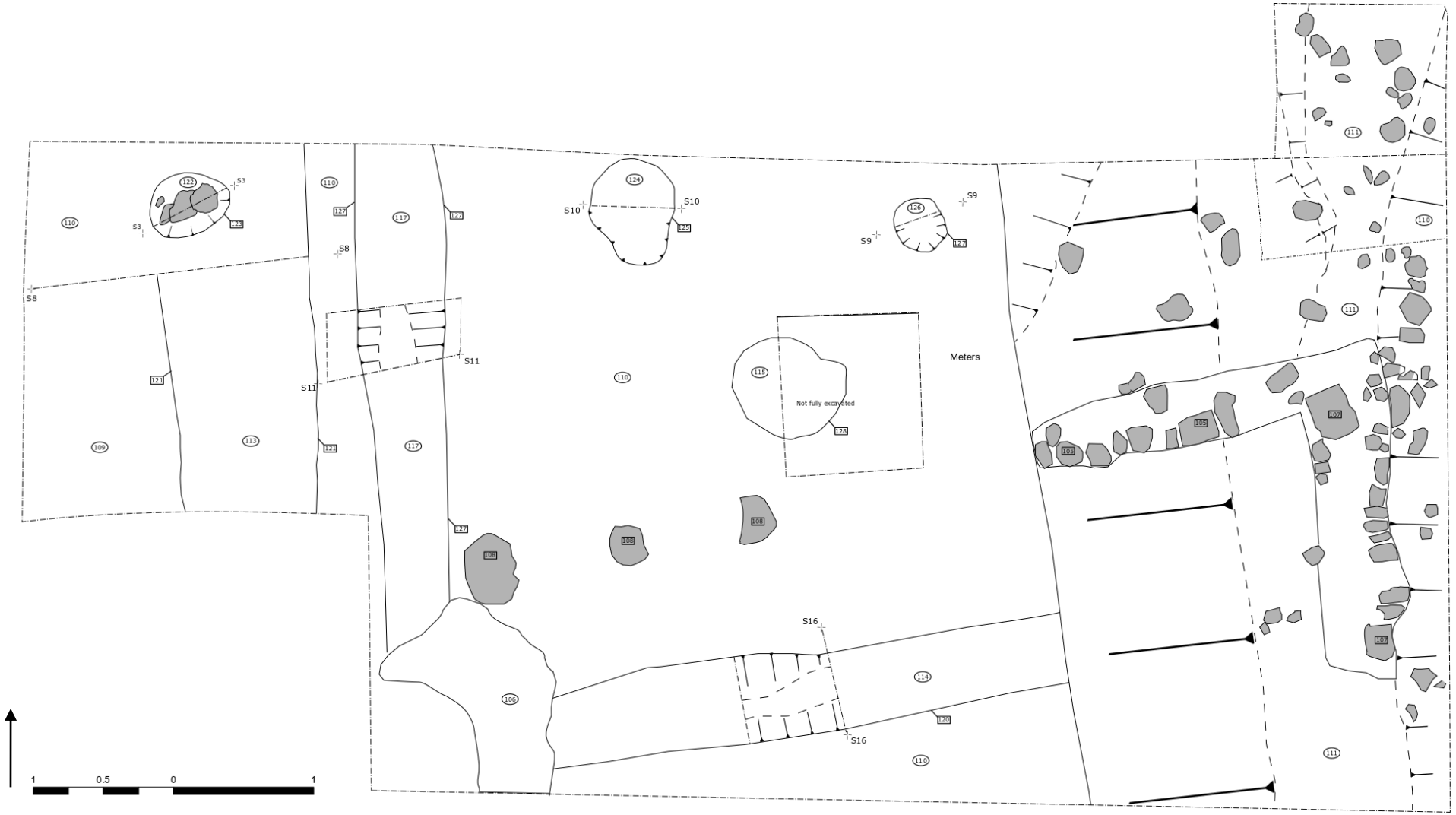
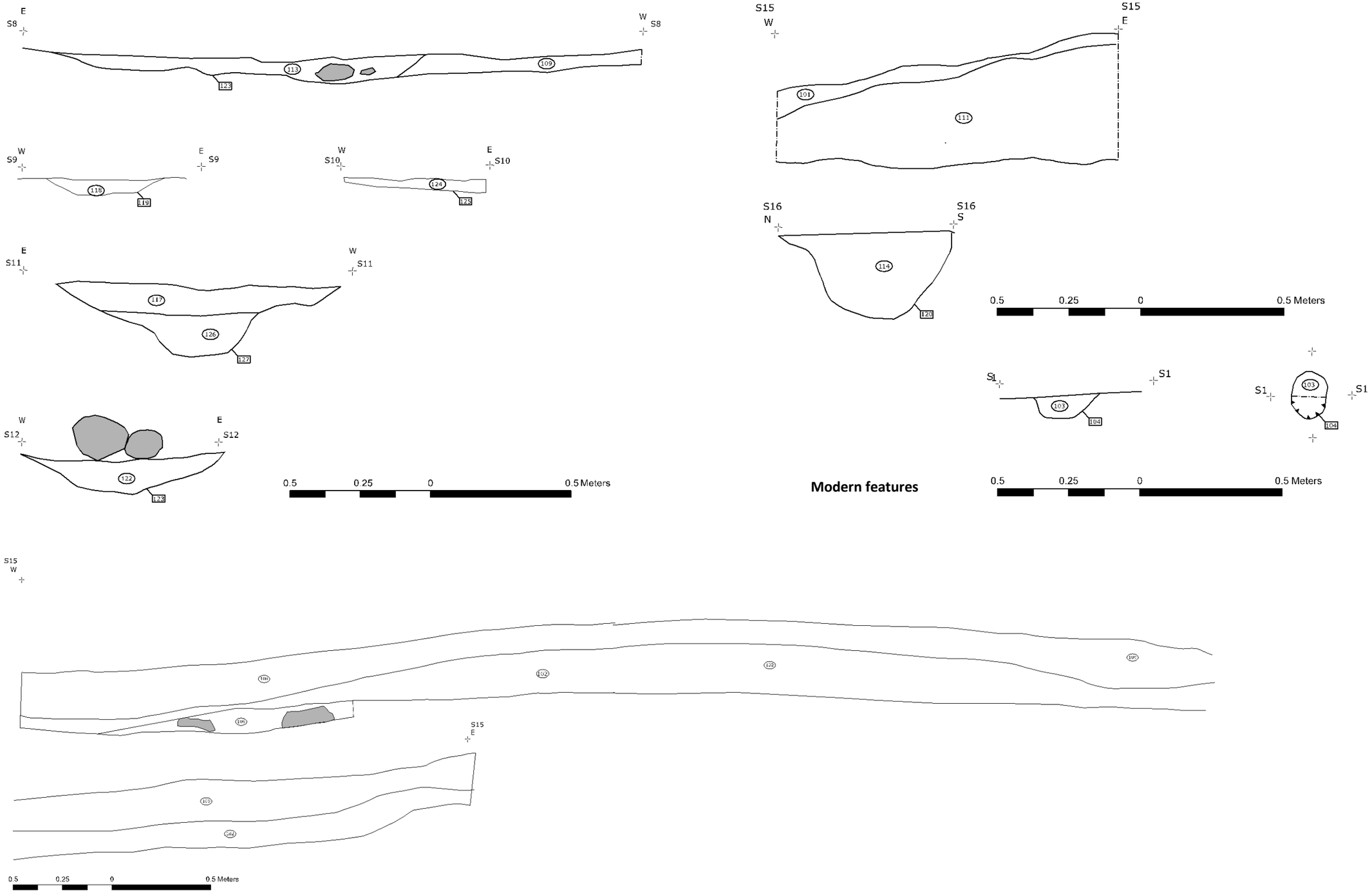


Figure 4: Trench A Plan



Modern features

Figure 5: Trench A Sections

Figure 6: Trench B: Plan and Sections

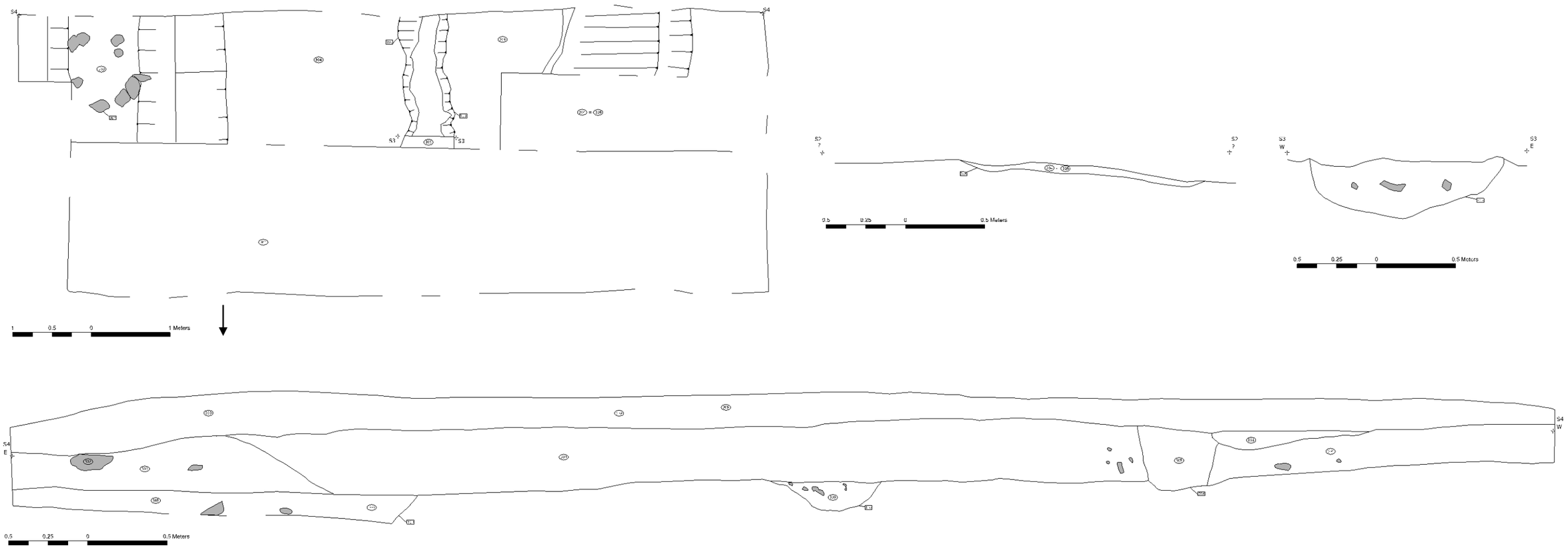
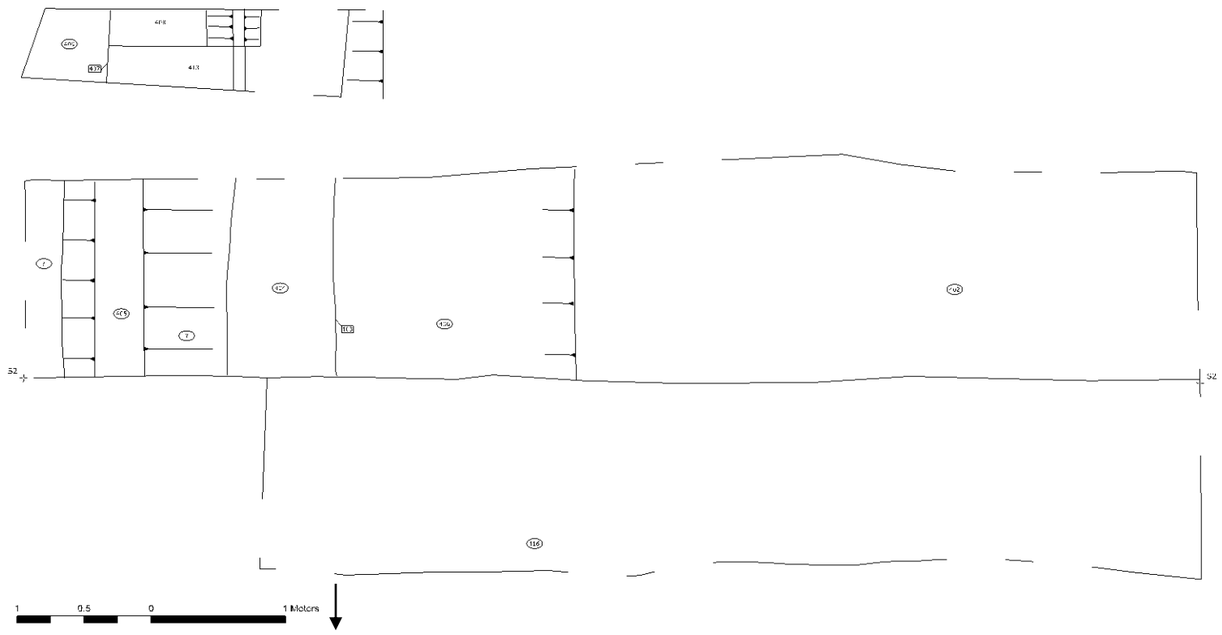


Figure 7: Trench C Plan and Sections



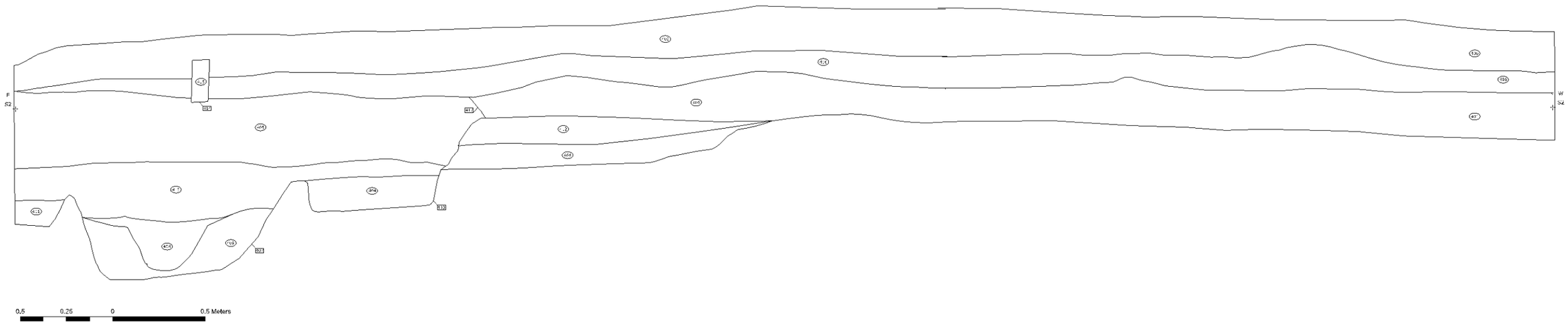


Figure 8: Trench D Plans and Sections

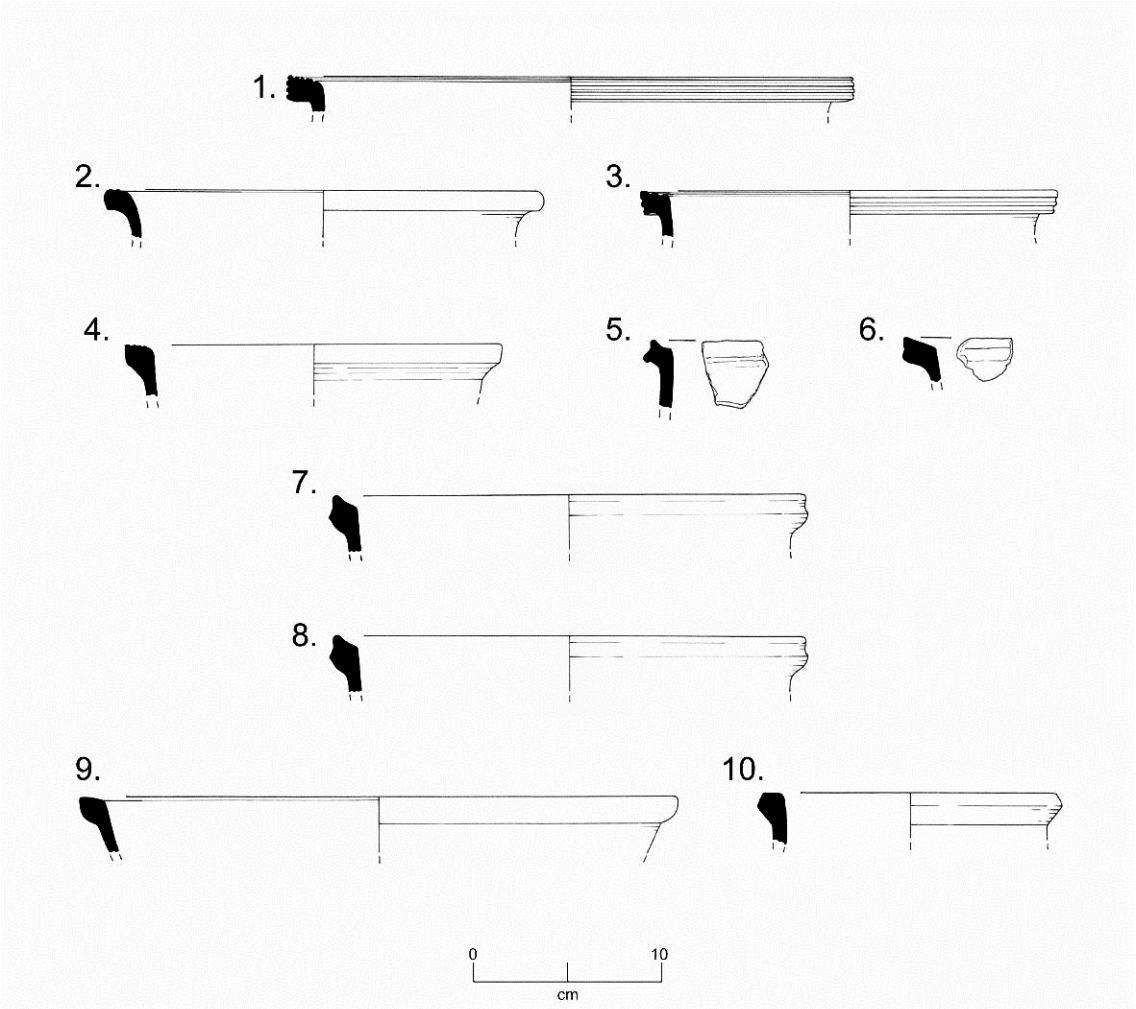


Figure 9: Pottery illustrations; Squared lozenge rims

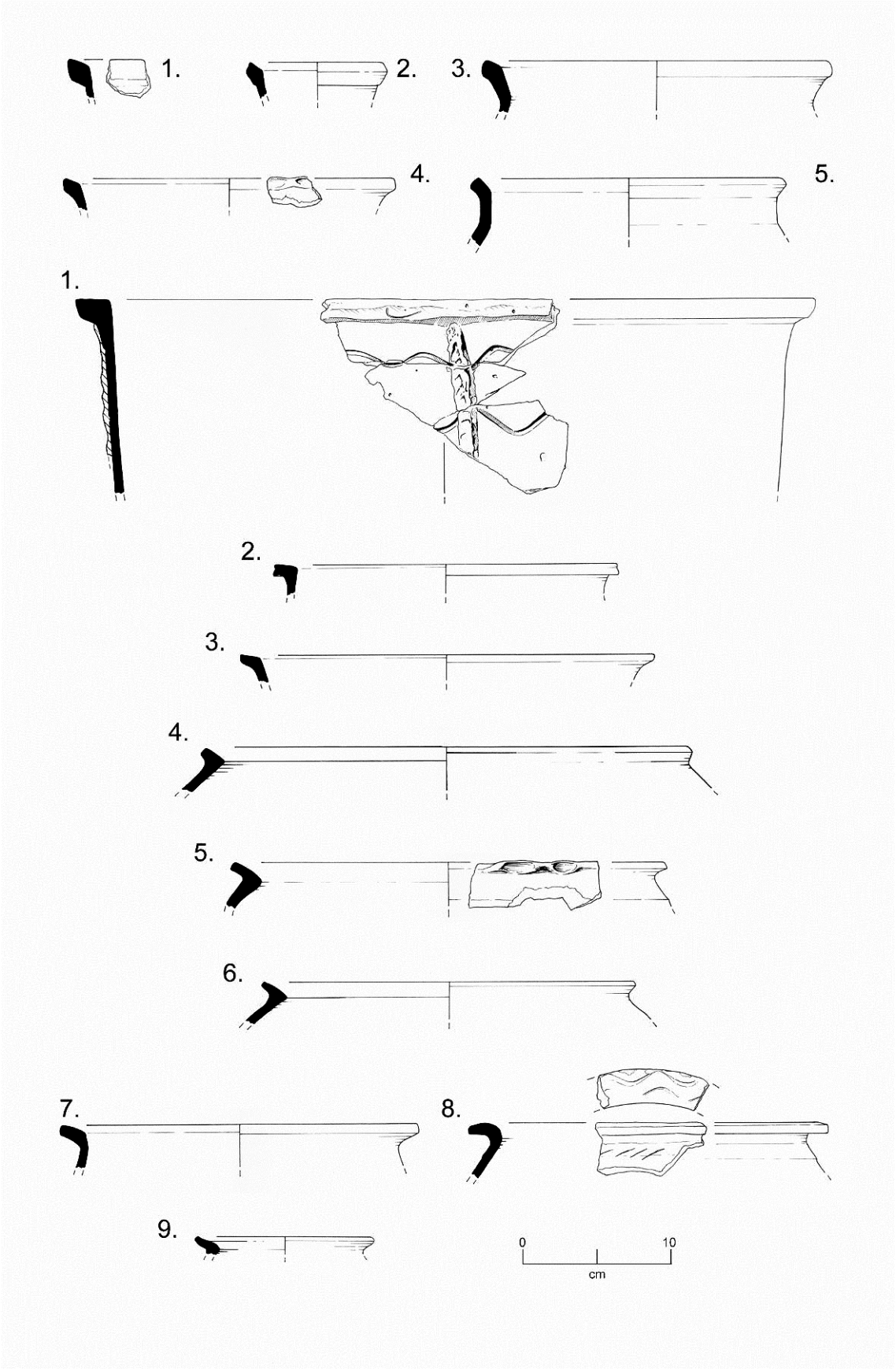


Figure 10: Pottery illustrations; Simple lozenge rims and flanged rims

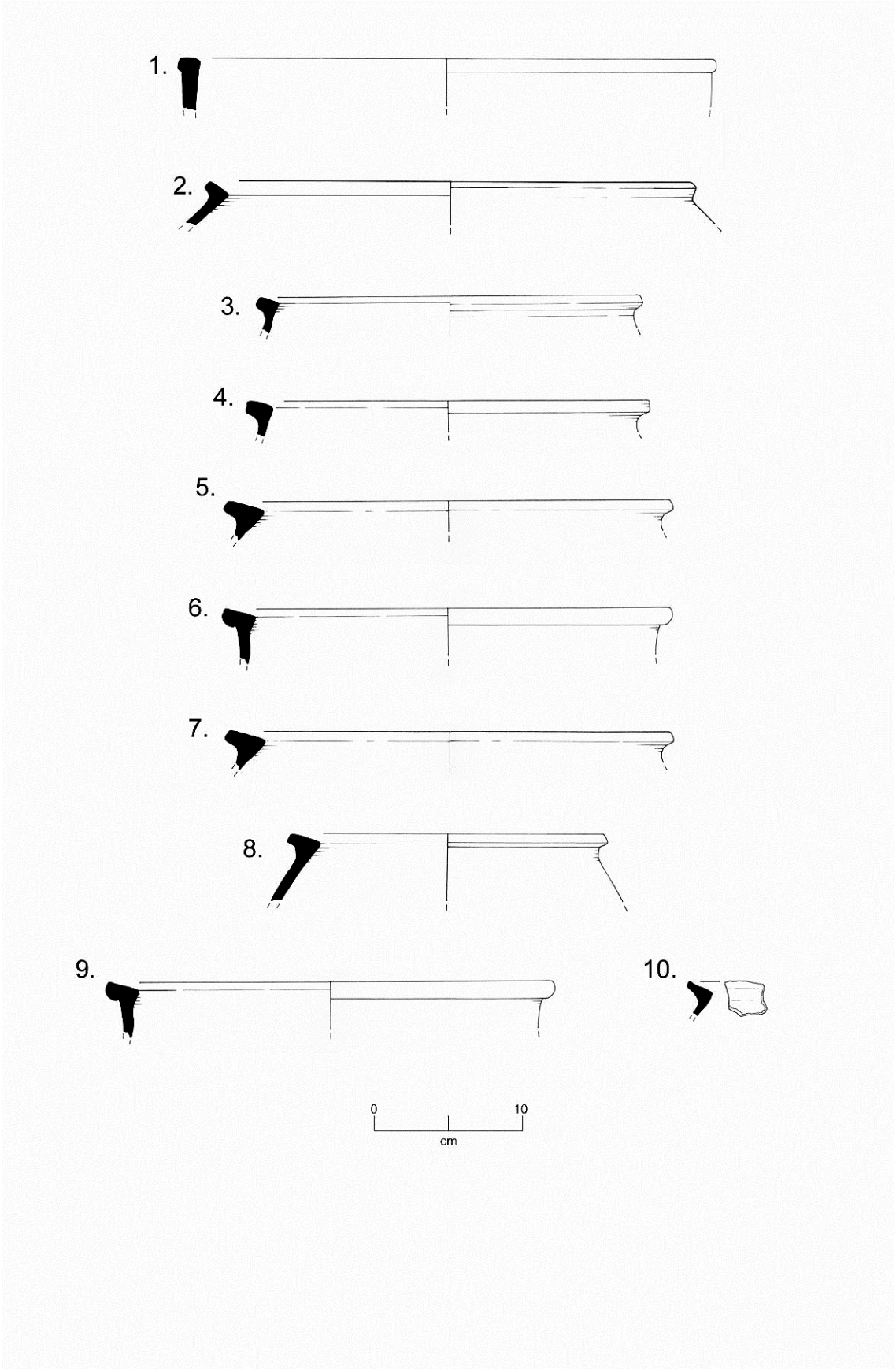


Figure 11: Pottery illustrations: Expanded flanged rims

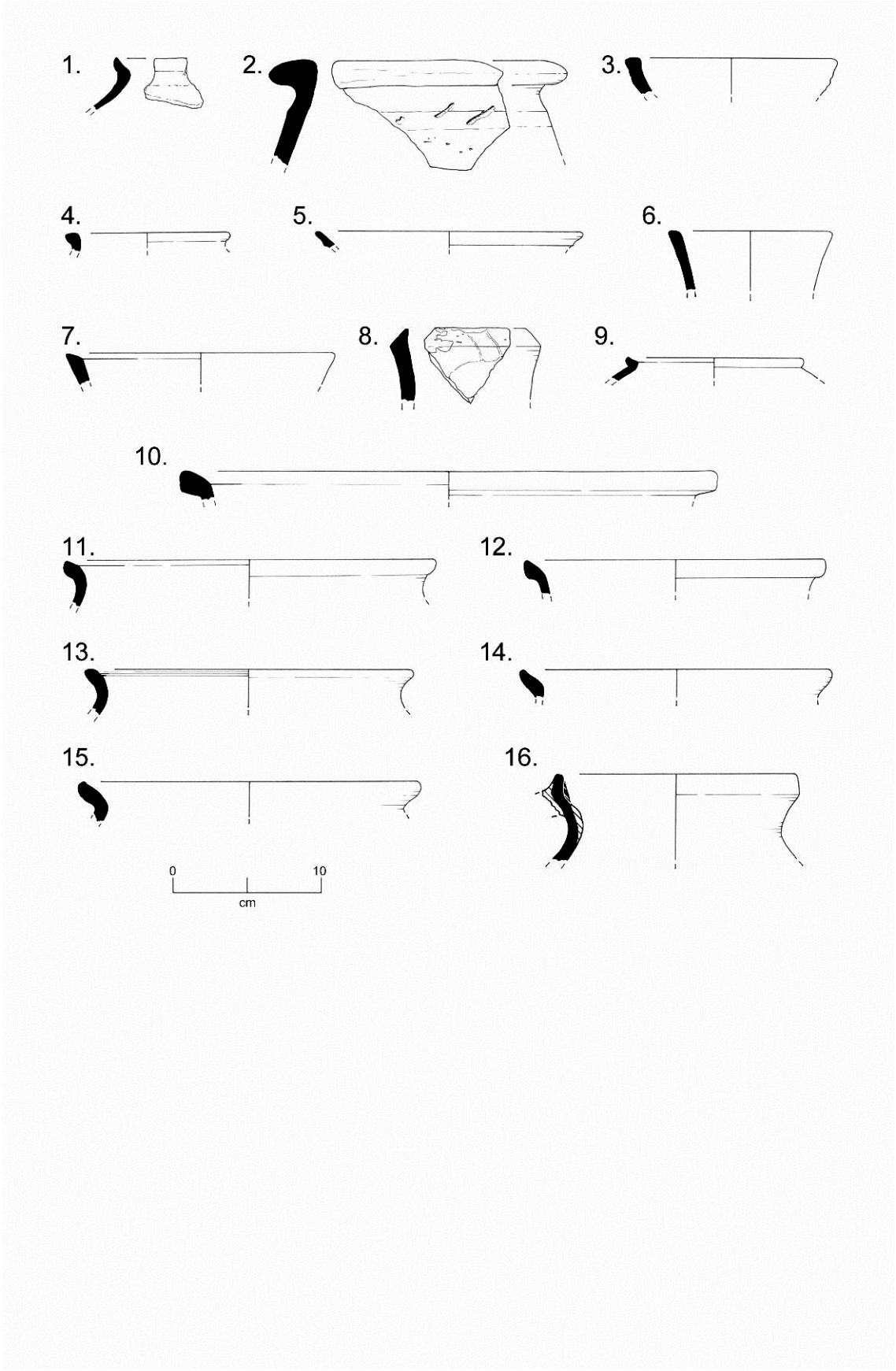


Figure 12: Pottery illustrations; Everted rounded rims

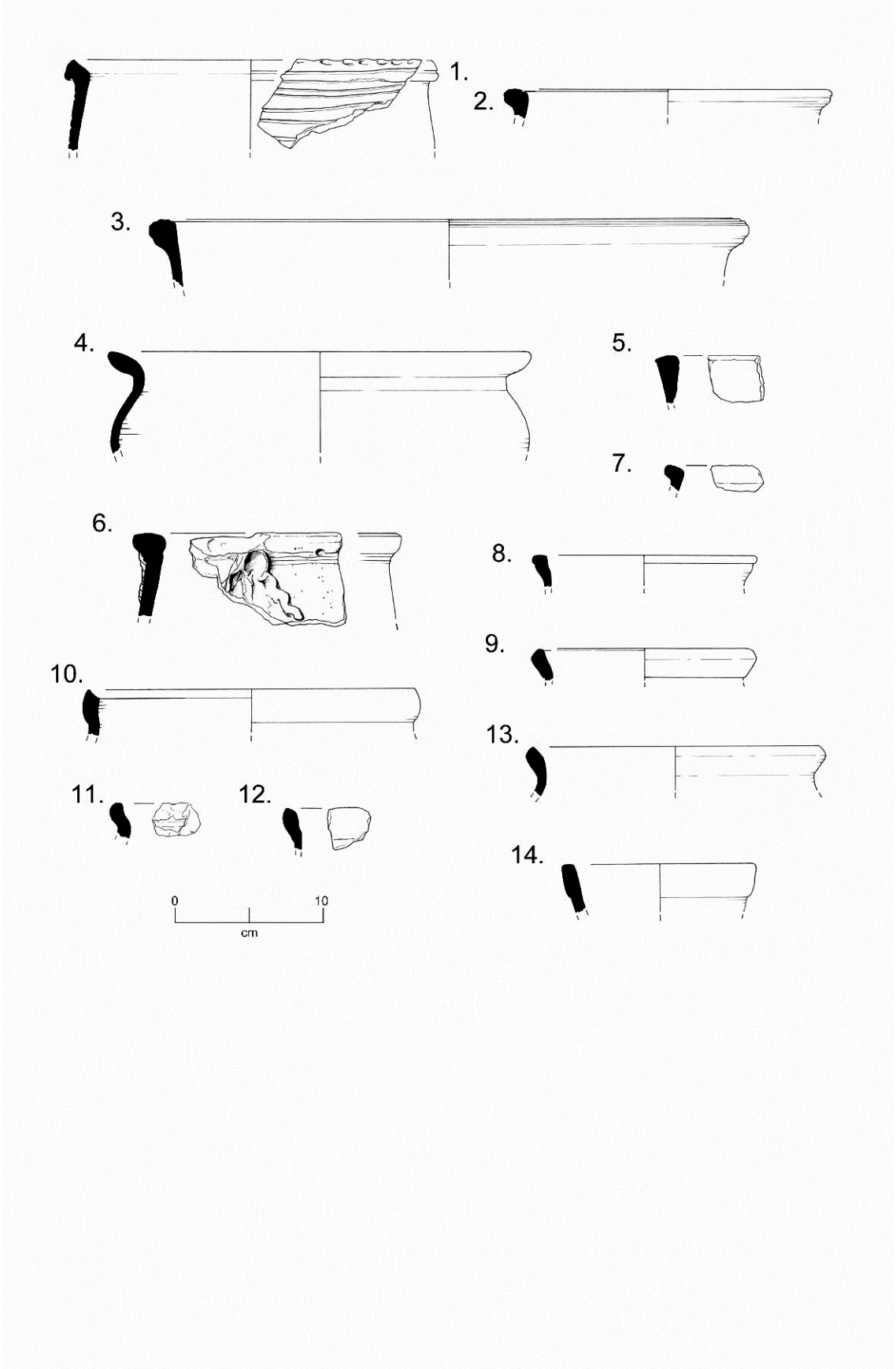


Figure 13: Pottery illustrations; Everted expanded rims

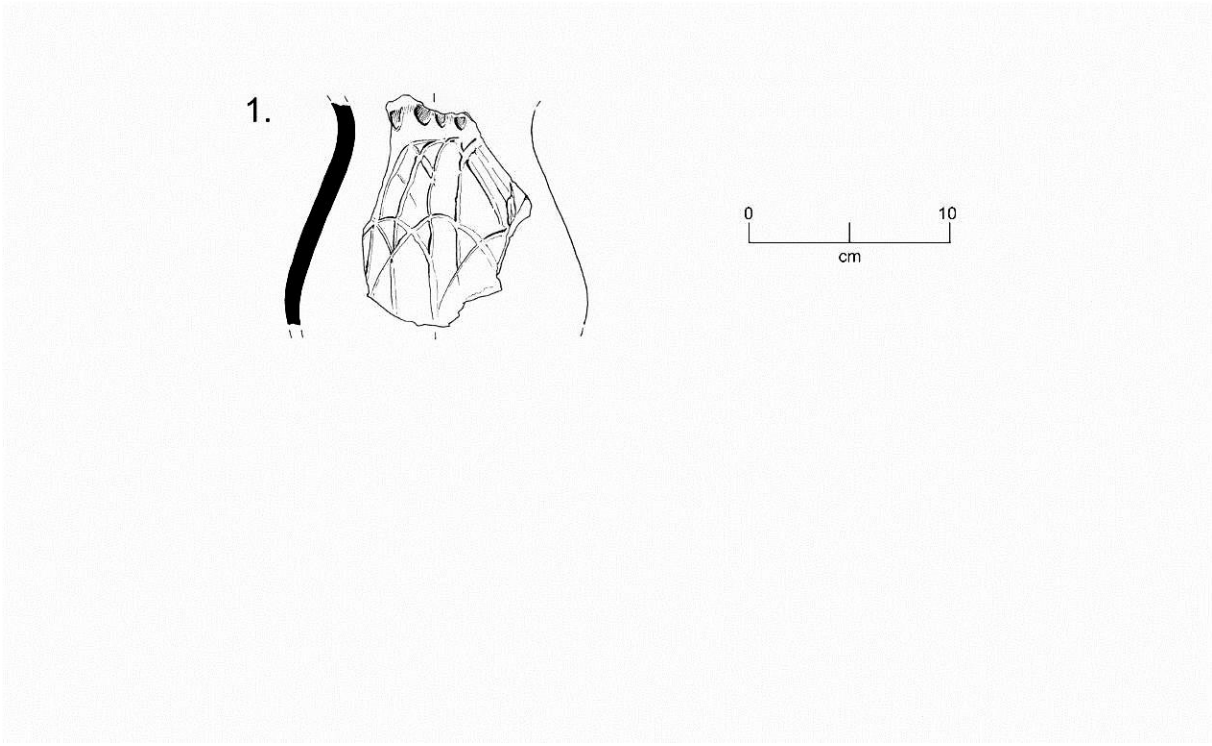


Figure 14: Pottery illustrations; Glazed jug

Figure 15: Clay tobacco pipe

Figure 16: Stone Bowl

A

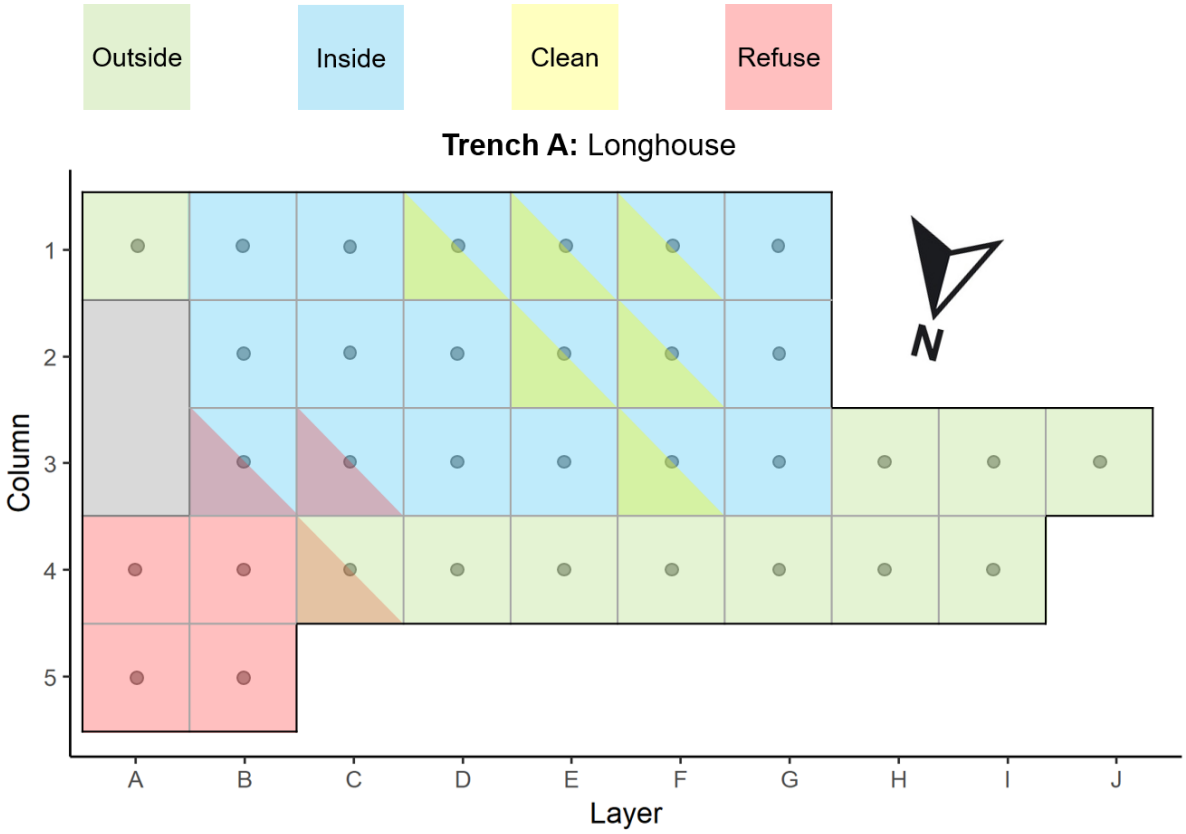


Figure 17: pXRF Data plot for Trench

Figure 18: Section across gully [120]

Figure 19: Section across gully [127]

Figure 20: Stone bowl SF3 [113] exposed during excavation in Trench A

Figure 21: Pot in situ in fill [113], Trench A

Figure 22: Section across post-trench fill [113] and post-hole [123], Trench A

Figure 23: Wall foundations [105 & 107 plus post pads [108] in Trench A

Figure 24: Trench B Section across stone bank [203]

Figure 25 Trench B; Parallel gullies [207 & 209]

Figure 26: General view across Trench C

Figure 27: Pot *in situ* in Trench C

Figure 28: General view of Trench D

Figure 29: Volunteers working hard at the start of the excavation in Trench A

Figure 30: Volunteers working hard in Trench B

Figure 31: Regular site visitor

Figure 32: The Team

Figure 33: Post excavation work

Tables

Table 1: List of Contexts & Phasing

Context	Type	Phase	Pot	Bone	Clay Pipe	Fe	Flint	Glass	CBM	Other
Trench A										
100	Topsoil	5	108		1	15	2	91	29	Slag, 3 clinker, lead, whetstone, glass waste
101	Layer	4	10							
102	Layer	4	378		1		3	12	5	
103	Fill of 104	5								
104	Posthole	5								
105	Wall	3								
106	Layer	1	40				1			
107	Wall	3								
108	Wall	3								
109	Layer	1	12							
110	Natural									
111	Layer	2	24	1						
112	Cut	4								
113	Fill	1	141			1				Stone bowl (SF3)
114	Fill of 112	4	8							
115	Fill of 128	1	29							
116	Layer	4	14							
117	Fill of 127	1	27							5 charcoal, clinker, 9 daub
118	Fill of 119	1								
119	Post hole	1								
120	Gully	1								
121	Cut	1								
122	Fill of 123	1								
123	Post hole	1								
124	Fill of 125	1	2							
125	Cut	1								
126	Fill of 127	1	14							7 daub
127	Gully	1								
128	Feature	1								
U/S			9							Coin
Trenches A & B										
U/S						6				Coin, 4 coal
Trench B										
200	Topsoil	3	103	1		4	3	47	29	4 fuel waste, 2 coal, daub, clinker, bead
201	Layer	3	245	1	3	3		9		
202	=201	3	312							
203	Bank	2	24							
204	Layer	2	133							
205	Layer	?	15							
206	Fill of 207	2	60							18 daub
207	Gully	1								
208	Fill of 209	2	13							
209	Gully	1								
210	Natural									
U/S			17							Cu alloy
Trench C										

Context	Type	Phase	Pot	Bone	Clay Pipe	Fe	Flint	Glass	CBM	Other
300	Topsoil & Turf	5	190			3	1		4	9 coal, clinker, fuel waste
301	Layer	4	98			1				
302	Layer/bank	3								
303	Layer/bank	3	44							
304	Layer	4	128			1	1			
305	Fill of 306	5	57			2				7 fuel waste,
306	Gully	4								
307	Layer	1	7						5	
308	Fill of 311	1								
309	Fill of 310	2	51							
310	Cut	2								
311	Cut	1								
312	Natural?									
313	Hollow	4								
U/S			107							
Trench C & D										
U/S						2				clinker
Trench D										
400	Turf & Topsoil	4	710	13		2	2	1	5	8 coal, fuel waste, whetstone
401	Layer	4	226	1		1	2			1 cinder, 20 coal, 1 daub
402	Natural									
403	Ditch	2								
404	Fill of 403	2	11							
405	Layer/bank	3	6							Coin (SF401)
406	Layer	1								
407	Ditch	2								
408	Fill of 419	2	18							
409	Fill of 407	2								
410	Ditch	1								
411	Fill of 410	1		1						Tooth
412	Layer	1								
413	Layer	3								
414	Cut	4								
415	Fill of 414	4								
416	Layer	4								
417	Cut	3								
418	Cut	2								
419	Cut	2								
U/S			16			1		4		2 coins
No Trench										
U/S			61		1		1			

Table 2: Pottery catalogue

Trench	Context	Description
A	100	Plain ware sherds, somewhat abraded. Sherds include 19th century or later earthenware, china and a stoneware marmalade jar or similar. Glazed material comprises 4 body sherds, including one with an applied impressed cordon.
A	101	Plain ware includes 1 rim with simple rounded section.
A	102	Plain ware includes a number of damaged rim fragments. Additionally there are rims: Large expanded (2) Large flanged with belled interior (5) Short medium-sized everted (2) Short medium-sized rounded Simple everted Small deep-flanged (2) Squared lozenge Rectangular section everted (2) Folded lozenge Glazed material includes green-glazed upright rim, lozenge rims from medium-sized jars (2), lozenge rim with indentations. Earthenware, glass ware waster, 19th century.
A	109	Plain ware includes a near-bifid rim in East Cleveland Ware.
A	113	Plain ware includes vessel 1, a jar with a large flanged rim with an applied vertical ridge and arc decoration, and vessel 2, a jar with a long flanged rim. In addition there is a medium-sized jar with a long flanged rim, the upper surface of which has undulating scoring, a medium-sized jar with a tall lozenge-profile rim and a sherd from a small jar with a light everted rim. Glazed ware includes a fragment of tubular spout bearing traces of glaze from a jug and a number of glazed body sherds, including: a sherd from a jug with vertical groove and open circular impressions, rim sherd with handle stub bearing thin green 'pimply' glaze, thought to be a standard East Cleveland Ware finish, and 2 sherds from a jug with scored decoration – perhaps so-called York Glazed Ware, whose origin is itself unclear (Jennings 1992, 18).
A	115	Plain ware includes 2 very hard-fired body sherds, together with an East Cleveland Ware sherd with raised cordon. Glazed ware comprises 6 sherds abraded with disappearing glaze.
A	126	Plain ware sherds include 2 from a medium-sized jar with everted rim.
B	200	Plain ware body sherds, rim sherds include a large flange-rim jar with grooves on rim exterior and on the upper body below. Earthenware, china – 19th century.
B	201	Plain ware sherds, many abraded, with 11 rim fragments all previously seen. Possible Medieval plain tile fragment (2), 80 g. Twisted rod handle with thin green pimply glaze, large rod handle, glazed jar and jug body sherds, all probably East Cleveland Ware. Scarborough Ware body sherd.

Trench	Context	Description
		Sherds of cream and blue glazed china, 19th century, modern brick.
B	202	Plain ware sherds. Glazed sherds include rod handles (2) and a jug rim.
B	203	Glazed material comprises sherd of a large section short everted rim with green external glaze and body sherds from a vessel with incurved rim which has an extended flange, finger impressions along the outer edge. Jug fragment with vertical grooved interspersed with columns of open circular impressions, brownish-green glaze over a pinkish-brown fabric.
B	204	Plain ware includes: Body sherd with horizontal grooves. Rims: Large expanded everted (3) Medium-sized expanded everted Medium-sized short everted Medium-sized flanged everted, the external rim surface grooved (2) Medium-sized lozenge with internal bevelled edge
B	205	Mixed plain ware. Single glazed sherd.
B	206	Plain ware includes an everted rounded rim in fine sandy fabric with quartz dust present, and another with extended ledge rim with flat upper surface. Glazed ware includes body sherds with either thin interior or exterior glaze, possibly all East Cleveland Ware. A rim sherd slightly everted and expanded, another rounded with apple green glaze.
B	208	Plain ware sherds. Glazed sherds include a jug base with pedestal ring with thin green East Cleveland Ware glaze.
C	300	Comprising mostly plain ware body sherds from undecorated jars, although there is a single sherd with a raised cordon. Rims present appear to be typical of the assemblage as a whole. The majority of vessels appear to be medium-sized and large, occasionally with carbonised accretions on the exterior, but mostly perhaps used for storage. Rims are frequently lozenge-shaped, sometimes angled to provide a bevelled interior surface. The same form is used to create an angular rim with a horizontal upper surface and a vertical exterior face. One or both rim surfaces can bear one or two lines of horizontal grooves. The same decorative trait can sometimes be found on upper parts of the vessel. A sherd from the rim of a plainware jug has a moulded external with finger-print impressions along it. More simple rounded rims are also present, in this context there is a rounded rim with a small external bead. Glazed sherds include a piece with dark green glaze over roulette decoration, likely to be Scarborough Ware. An angular rim fragment has traces of glaze on the upper surface suggesting that similar rim forms were used for both plain ware and glazed vessels, while a rim fragment from a flagon with splashed thin green glaze the usual fabric confirms that the fabric was used for both glazed and plain forms. A small group of sherds derive from vessels with thin green glaze on either the interior or exterior surface – but not both. A large rim fragment with the stub of a rod handle has apple-green glaze over a pale buff fabric, while a piece from a flagon is also in this fabric. Also present in the assemblage are sherds (5) of earthenware and salt-glazed china (1) of probable 19th-century date.

Trench	Context	Description
C	301	Small quantity plain ware sherds. Sherds (5) with clear glaze, one with an applied cordon.
C	304	Body sherds mostly from large jars. Rim sherds include: Plain everted with squared edge Lozenge section everted Simple everted (2) Glazed vessels comprise a jar with external green glaze, a jug with rouletted decoration beneath a dark green glaze (?Scarborough Ware), and a hard-fired jug with lozenge-section upright rim and splashes of thick dark green and brown glaze which may be relatively late (16th or 17th century).
C	305 (SF 301)	Body sherds, mostly from large plainware jars, two sherds have internal green glaze, one of these has external carbonised accretions and there are accretions on another sherd. Suggested 'graffiti' on the interior surface of a jar is likely to be a mark made during manufacture, or perhaps more likely, the impression left by kiln-consumed vegetable matter. Glazed sherds (8) from jars with thin splashed green glaze. A rim sherd with a handle scar is from a very large jug or, more likely, a two handled (probably) cistern. Sherds with dark green glaze on rouletted decoration are likely to be Scarborough Ware. Joining sherds have a brown external glaze while a jug with external bevelled rim appears to be perhaps 16th century. A rim sherd with mid-grey fabric and surfaces is likely to be Roman.
C	308	Small quantity plain ware sherds. Fragment of a large green-glazed rod handle.
C	309	Small quantity of plain ware sherds. A rod handle with traces of green glaze
D	400	A number of plainware rim fragments are present: Long everted with expanded terminal (2) Medium everted with expanded terminal (3) Short everted with expanded terminal Medium everted with narrow terminal Short everted with narrow terminal Short everted with rounded terminal (2) Medium everted rounded Large everted rounded (4) Small lozenge-section, plain Medium lozenge-section, grooves on the upper surface (4) Medium lozenge-section, grooves on the upper surface and lower shoulder (2) Large lozenge-section, grooves on upper surface and edge Medium lozenge-section (4) Large lozenge-section (2)

Trench	Context	Description
		Medium rounded with raised cordon below. This is similar to the 'bifid' rim typical of Tees Valley Ware, but the fabric is typical of the soft fabrics in this assemblage. Also in a medieval fabric style, a ceramic lump, 10g. Glazed material comprises a large rod jug handle, a strap handle with dark green glaze and three raised vertical ridges, sherds (2) from a jug with hard buff fabric and apple-green glaze, as well as body sherds from several vessels. Also present is a rim sherd from a greyware beaker with slip coat, Roman in date – also china of late 19th century type.
D	401	Body sherds from jars, one of which has wavy-line decoration, and two others with horizontal grooves. Several sherds are in a hard-fired smooth fabric. There are a few rim sherds present: Lozenge-section, grooves on upper surface Plain lozenge section (4) Expanded plain Short plain everted (3) Long plain everted Horizontal plain everted The very limited quantity of glazed ware includes sherds (2+) of Scarborough Ware. In addition there is a fragment of jug rim with a handle scar, a rod handle with short impressed decoration, and a fragment of small rod handle, perhaps from a tyg. A few plainware sherds have probable accidental glaze splashes. A small piece of salt-glazed china appears to be intrusive.
D	404	Plainware sherds (2), near-white fabric, one with a rim upper surface decorated with a groove.
D	405	Plainware sherds include a rim with lozenge section and a groove in the upper surface.
D	408	Plainware sherds include a fragment of a short rounded everted rim. Glazed material includes a sherd from a thin green-glazed jug with a raised cordon and sherds (2) from a vessel with thick green external glaze.
D	u/s	Abraded plain ware sherds including one rim. Rod handle from a jug of uncertain provenance, sherd rouletted jug - Scarborough Ware. Sherd of china, late 19th century.

Treatment

The pottery has been examined and identified by eye, and no detailed fabric analysis has been undertaken. In the current state of knowledge of the medieval ceramics of Yorkshire and the north-east identifications of some fabrics have to be regarded as provisional. Quantification has been by sherd count and weight (MNV). The degree of abrasion to some sherds, the general absence of diagnostic pieces, and the small size of most of the sherds, limits the accuracy to which MNV can be achieved. No thin section analysis has been done and identification has been using a 10× lens. Quantification of sherds excludes fragments with a total surface area of less than around 100^2 mm, although the weight of fragments has been included.

Table 3: Medieval pottery sherds by weight and number (+ = fragments)

	Plainware		**glazed**	
Area A	sherds	weight	sherds	weight
100	20	140g	4	80g
101	6	100g		
102	225 23+	1590g 125g	34 2	280g 15g
106	20	180g	3	30g
109	6	35g	2	115g
111	11+	17	7	55g
113	v1 5 v2 4 87	255g 125g 925g	25 v3 2	360g 95g
114	3+	15	1	5g
115	16	75g	6	45g
116	7	55g	1	25g
117	18	140g	4	50
124	1	5g		
126	12	195g		
TOTAL	*464*	*3077g*	*167*	*1155*

Area B	sherds	weight	sherds	weight
200	54	375g	9	155g
201	111	780g	22	270g
202	122	1000g	25	220g
203	14+	120g	5	70g
204	88+	570g		
205	11	55g	1	5g
206	45	295g	11+	140g
208	10	70g	3	90g
TOTAL	*455*	*3265g*	*76*	*950g*

Area C	sherds	weight	sherds	weight
300	121+	800g	19	215g
301	96+	645g	11+	85g
303	27+	140g	4	35g
304	60+	520g	5	75g
305	50+	950g	16	240g
308	6	30g	1	35g
309	32+	220 g	2	50g
Total	*392*	*3305g*	*58*	*735g*

Area D	sherds	weight	sherds	weight
400	410+	2685g	44	645g
401	75+	665g		
404	11	100g		
405	4+	25g	1	5g
408	11	125g	2	20g
411	1	5g		
Total	*512*	*3605g*	*47*	*670*
u/s	45+	295g	7	100g
A u/s	4+	80g		
C u/s	11	45g	2	20g

Table 4: Medieval sherds by area: showing relative proportions of plain ware and fine ware

	Plain ware			Fine ware		
	sherds		weight	sherds		weight
Area A	464	74%	3077g	167	26%	1155
Area B	455	86%	3265g	76	14%	950g
Area C	392	87%	3305g	58	13%	735g
Area D	512	92%	3605g	47	8%	670

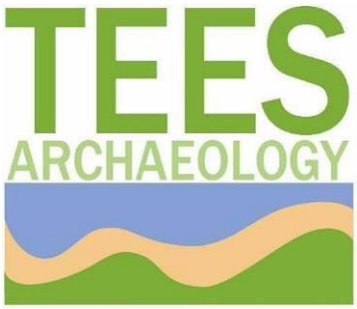
Table 5: Ceramic building material		
Context	**Description**	**Count**
100	**CBM** **Tile**	**22** **7**
102	**Tile**	**5**
200	**CBM**	**29**
300	**CBM** **Drain**	**2** **2**
308	**CBM**	**5**
400	**CBM** **Drain**	**6** **2**

Table 6: Data from palaeo-environmental assessment

Sample		**1**	**2**
Context		**126**	**115**
Feature number		**127**	**128**
Feature		**Gully**	**Pit**
Material available for radiocarbon dating		□	□
Volume processed (l)		15	9
Volume of flot (ml)		75	60
Residue contents			
Bone (calcined)	indet. frags	(+)	(+)
Charcoal		++	+
Clinker / cinder		+	-
Coal / coal shale		-	(+)
Fired clay		++	(+)
Pottery (number of fragments)		2	6
Flot matrix			
Bone (calcined)	indet. frags	-	(+)
Charcoal		++	++
Clinker / cinder		+	+
Coal / coal shale		+	(+)
Fuel ash		+	+
Monocotyledon stems (charred)		(+)	(+)
Roots (modern)		++	+++
Tuber / rhizome (charred)		(+)	-
Uncharred seeds		(+)	(+)
Charred remains (total count)			
(a) *Centaurea cyanus* (Cornflower)	achene	1	-
(c) *Avena* sp (Oat species)	>2mm large grain	2	1
(c) Cerealia indeterminate	culm node	1	-
(c) Cerealia indeterminate	grain	20	5
(c) *Pisum sativum* (Pea)	fruit	1	-
(c) *Pisum sativum* (Pea) / *Vicia faba* (Bean)	fruit frag.	3	-
(c) *Triticum* cf. *aestivum* (Bread Wheat)	rachis frag.	-	1
(c) *Triticum* cf. *aestivum* (cf. Bread Wheat)	grain	7	3
(c) *Triticum* sp (Wheat species)	grain	6	-
(c) *Vicia faba* (Bean)	fruit	2	-
(t) *Corylus avellana* (Hazel)	nutshell frag.	1	5
(x) *Chenopodium* sp (Goosefoots)	seed	2	-
(x) Poaceae undiff. (Grass family)	<1mm caryopsis	1	1
(x) Poaceae undiff. (Grass family)	>1mm caryopsis	4	-
Identified charcoal (□presence)			
Corylus avellana (Hazel)		□	□
Prunus sp (Cherries-blackthorn, wild and bird cherry)		-	□
Quercus sp (Oaks)		□	□

[a-arable; c-cultivated; h-heathland; t-tree/shrub; x-wide niche.
(+): trace; +: rare; ++: occasional; +++: common; ++++: abundant]


Community led initiative
Skelton
Townscape Heritage
celebrating our past and our future


TEES
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